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Kritische Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der religiösen Toleranz und zur Tradition der Lessing'schen Ringparabel

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Abstract

Although the medieval tradition of the famous parable which stands in the centre of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* is quite well known, the present writer holds that the older versions of this motive are usually misinterpreted, being habitually read in the light of the German poet's text written during the age of enlightenment. An analysis, however, of the original stories of Etienne de Bourbon, Busone, Boccaccio et al., shows that their real aim was to illustrate an aporia and the shrewdness necessary to escape from it, not to call for religious tolerance. Indeed, the latter idea grew out of the disasters of the Thirty Years' War only, and was nearly completely alien to the Middle Ages. The few exceptions (Wolfram von Eschenbach, Ramon Llull, Nicolaus Cusanus) — and their limitations — are briefly discussed.

Keywords

religious tolerance, Middle Ages, Lessing, Ring parable

Der Vorhang am Ende des Nathan — Lessings berühmten ‚Toleranz-stück' von 1779 — fällt und verhüllt die Umarmung des Juden mit den Christen und den Muslimen. Der Schluss des Dramas — die Entde-ckung verborgen gewesener Verwandtschaft — symbolisiert doch vor allem eine Utopie, nämlich die, die konkreten Religionen mögen sich ihrer Wesenseinheit in der ‚natürlichen Religion' bewusst werden und daher einander mit Liebe gegenüberstehen.

> Laßt lächelnd wenigstens ihr einen Wahn,
> In dem sich Jud' und Christ und Muselmann
> Vereinigen, — so einen süßen Wahn![1]

sagt Daja schon ganz am Beginn des Werks auf seinen Ausgang hindeutend, wenn auch quasi auf niedererer Ebene, nämlich der des Glaubens an das Wirken der Engel in unserer Welt.

Was Lessing in seinem dramatischen Gedicht mit den Mitteln des Dichters, also theoretisch, gefordert und als gestische Allegorie durch die allgemeine Umarmung ausgedrückt hat, ein Miteinander der Religionen, ist auch in der Praxis gelegentlich — doch stets ohne größeren Erfolg — tatsächlich versucht worden. Der Mogulkaiser Akbar (1542–1605) etwa ließ ein ‚Gottesdiensthaus' errichten, in dem allwöchentlich Gespräche von Vertretern verschiedener Religionen stattfanden, und gründete 1582 die überkonfessionelle ‚Religion Gottes'. Oder: In den Gottesdiensten der von Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan († 1927) organisierten Sufi Society liegen die heiligen Bücher der verschiedenen Religionen nebeneinander auf dem Altar; zu Beginn des Gottesdienstes werden sieben Kerzen entzündet, die für Hinduismus, Buddhismus, Zoroastrismus, Judentum, Christentum und Islam stehen, während die siebte Kerze den bekannten und unbekannten Wahrheitssuchern geweiht ist.[2] Solche Vereinigungsversuche sind stets nur auf weltgeschichtlich unbedeutendem Niveau verblieben oder haben sich wie bei der persischen Bahai-Religion von einer ökumenisch geplanten Kirche zu einer Kirche sui generis gewandelt. Auffallend ist, dass sie fast alle ihren Ursprung im asiatischen Raum haben.

Im Westen erscheinen dagegen die von zweitausend Jahren christlicher Kirche, außerhalb derer es kein Heil gibt,[3] geprägten mentalen Strukturen für solche Ideen ungünstig zu sein. Die eine Offenbarungs- und Buchreligion vertretenden Großkirchen stehen der Idee einer Menschheitsreligion feindlich gegenüber, würde dies doch Selbstbeschränkung und Herrschaftsverzicht implizieren — es genüge, als ein

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[1] Lessings Werke in sechs Bänden, hg. v. Rob. Riemann, Leipzig s.a., II, 268. — Umständehalber muss im Folgenden aus verschiedenen Lessing-Ausgaben zitiert werden.

[2] Friedrich Heiler, ed., Die Religionen der Menschheit, Stuttgart 5. Aufl. 1991, 549 ff.

[3] *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* Vgl. J. Beumer, Extra…, Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche III, 1959, 1320 f.

Beispiel auf die Predig von Erzbischof Dr. Karl Braun zur Unterscheidung der Geister am Pfingstsonntag 1998 im Bamberger Dom zu erinnern, die implizit den Toleranzgedanken verwirft.

Das Problem ist alt genug. Mit den Worten: „Ce sont les juifs qui ont posé au monde le problème de la vérité religieuse, en fondant la première religion universelle"[4] begann Gaston Paris, der wohl bedeutendste französische Altromanist des 19. Jahrhunderts, seine Abhandlung über die Ringparabel.[5] Es entbehrt da wohl nicht der Ironie, dass eben die europäische Urform der Ringparabel nach einer geläufigen Meinung der Forschung eine jüdische Erfindung ist? Und zwar eine, wie Paris es formulierte, typisch orientalische „manière d'éluder une question par une autre question",[6] erfunden unter dem Druck, einem Mächtigen anderer Glaubensüberzeugung die Frage nach der wahren Religion beantworten zu müssen.

Die älteste nachweisbare Version des Motivs scheint jedoch schon um 780 im ostkirchlichen Bereich auf und wird von einem Christen erzählt, nämlich vom nestorianischen Patriarchen Timotius dem abbasidischen Kalifen al-Mahdi. Ersterer verglich die wahre Religion mit einer Perle, die in einen nächtlich dunklen Raum gefallen sei. Jeder bemüht sich, sie aufzuheben, aber nur einer findet sie, während die anderen ein Steinchen dafür halten. Doch in der Dunkelheit glaubt jeder, er sei der glückliche Finder der Perle — bis der Tag anbricht, d.h. das Jüngste Gericht, das erst die Wahrheit offenbaren wird.[7]

Im Westen ist die Parabel zuerst um 1100 bezeugt, falls es stimmt, was der Marrane Rabbi Salomo Iben Verga überliefert, der freilich erst um 1500 schrieb: Auf die entsprechende Frage König Peters von Aragon habe sie der Weise Ephraim ben Sancho (1094–1104) erfunden; dabei geht es allerdings nur um den Vorzug des Christentums oder des Judentums, die von zwei Edelsteinen symbolisiert werden, welche der

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[4] Gaston Paris, Poèmes et légendes du moyen-âge, Paris 1900, 131; id., Les contes orientaux dans la littérature française du moyen âge, Paris 1875; id., Légendes du moyen âge, Paris 1904.

[5] Das Sujet ist sowohl in der Lessing-Literatur als auch in der Boccaccio-Literatur viele Male behandelt worden; vgl. die entsprechenden Personenbibliographien.

[6] Poèmes et légendes, 138.

[7] Friedrich Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas. Lessings Toleranzparabel und das Buch von den drei Betrügern, Heidelberg 1988, 254 ff. Die hier behauptete Rückführung auf die rabbinische Literatur überzeugt nicht.

Vater den Söhnen zurückgelassen, und deren jeweiligen Wert nur er kennt. „. . .so möge", fordert der Jude den Herrscher auf, „unser König einen Boten an den Vater im Himmel senden, denn das ist der grösste Juwelier und er wird den Unterschied der Steine schon angeben."[8] Keiner der Steine wird hier als unecht bezeichnet.

Niewöhner und Schmitt gehen, wie bereits die Romanisten des 19. Jahrhunderts (Landau, Paris[9]), davon aus, das Motiv sei überhaupt erst im Judentum des Hochmittelalters entstanden, suchen seinen Ursprung aber noch genauer bei Maimonides (1135–1204) oder in dessen Umkreis. Bei diesem Philosophen findet sich jedenfalls das Dictum von den drei Betrügern, hier Jesus, Paulus und Mohammed.[10] Wir wollen jedoch die weiteren Fassungen des Gleichnisses, die in der jüdischen und islamischen Literatur vorkommen und erst im 19. oder 20. Jahrhundert in eine westliche Sprache übersetzt wurden, nicht verfolgen, sondern nur einen Blick auf die europäisch-christliche Überlieferung des Mittelalters[11] werfen, aus der dann Lessing schöpfen sollte.

Diese beginnt freilich in ganz anderem Sinn, als man, von Nathans Ringparabel kommend, vermuten würde. Denn die älteste lateinische Version — sie datiert in die erste Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts, — bei der der Vater sein Kleinod seiner einzigen legitimen Tochter zugedacht hat, vergleicht diese mit der christlichen Religion und bezeichnet alle anderen Töchter als Bastardinnen, deren Ringe aber als Fälschungen. Es überrascht nicht, dass dieser Text von einem Inquisitor stammt, dem (heute v.a. durch seinen Bericht vom ‚heiligen Windhund'[12])bekannten Dominikaner Stephan von Bourbon († 1260/61).[13] Dieser nahm die Geschichte ausdrücklich als *exemplum ad fidei vere probacionem* in

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[8] Übersetzung ebd. 48 ff.

[9] Marcus Landau, Die Quellen des Decameron, Wien 2. Aufl. 1884, 185; Paris, Poèmes et légendes, 136 ff.

[10] Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas, 180.

[11] Die mittelalterlichen Versionen der Ringparabel verzeichnet V. Branca, ed., Boccaccio: Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio IV, Milano 1976, 1017. Es gibt auch verwandte Erzählungen vom magischen Ring, der einem der Söhne vererbt wird, ohne daß er einer Religion verglichen würde: Fredric C. Tubach, Index exemplorum, Helsinki 1969, nr. 2153 und v.a. nr. 4106.

[12] Jean-Claude Schmitt, Der heilige Windhund, Stuttgart 1982.

[13] A. Lecoy de la Marche, Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues tirés du recueil inédit d'Étienne de Bourbon, Paris 1877, 281 f.

sein Handbuch für Prediger auf, und andere spätmittelalterliche Autoren wie Johannes Bromyard übernahmen sie von ihm.[14] Hier lassen sich die im Ehebruch gezeugten Töchter sogar selbst die Kopien anfertigen, um vor Gericht das Erbe zu beanspruchen. Da jedoch nur der Edelstein im echten Ring Kranke zu heilen vermochte — offenbar eine Anspielung auf die Heilwunder Jesu — wurde nur der Anspruch seiner Besitzerin als legitim anerkannt, d.h. also nur das Christentum.

In der zeitlich nächsten, um 1270/85 auf Altfranzösisch geschriebene Fassung, wurde das Motiv sogar dazu benutzt, zu einem Kreuzzug aufzurufen. Denn im Dit du Vrai Aniel symbolisiert der Ring auch das Heilige Land, das militärisch von drei Fürsten für die Christenheit gesichert werden muß, dem König von Frankreich, dem Graf von Artois und dem Graf von Flandern.[15]

Und auch in der sehr verbreiteten, etwa gleichzeitigen Exempelsammlung der Gesta Romanorum dient die Geschichte vom Kaiser Christus und den drei Ringen dazu, den Vorrang des Christenglaubens zu unterstreichen: Zwar sind auch die beiden anderen Ringe wertvoll, sie bedeuten in Bezug auf die Juden das Heilige Land und in Bezug auf die Muslime Reichtum, aber die Christen besitzen den bei weitem kostbarsten Ring, ihre heilige Lehre.[16]

Diese frühen westeuropäischen Fassungen der Ringparabel dienten also stets dazu, mittels einer Allegorie den Vorzug des Christentums zu betonen. Zu einer Tolerierung der anderen Religionen wird nirgendwo aufgefordert.

Im italienischen Sprachraum des späten 13. Jahrhunderts ändert sich dann die Fabel: Der Novellino, eine anonyme Erzählsammlung, lässt die Entscheidung offen und platziert die Geschichte in den künftighin bekannten Rahmen eines Gesprächs zwischen dem Sultan und einem Juden. Ersterer ist allerdings keineswegs von religionsphilosophischen

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[14] Mario Penna, La parabola di tre anelli e la tolleranza nel medio evo, Torino 1952, 54. Vgl. auch Eberhard Hermes, Die drei Ringe. Aus der Frühzeit der Novelle, Göttingen 1964.

[15] Penna, La parabola di tre anelli, 58 ff.; Dictionnaire des lettres françaises — Le Moyen Age, ed. G. Hasenohr u.a., Paris 1992, 387. Vgl. C. Cuilleonánin, Religion and the Clergy in Boccaccio's Decameron, Rom 1984, 89.

[16] C. Epping u. L. Jäger, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, ‚Nathan der Weise'. Arbeitsbuch zur Salzburger Inszenierung, Salzburg 1984, 76 zitieren den in Wolfenbüttel vorhandenen Druck (Augsburg 1489).

Zweifeln bedrängt, deretwegen er dem Hebräer die verhängnisvolle Frage stellen würde. Sondern es geht ihm einzig um dessen Geld, und dem Juden geht es keineswegs darum, den Herrscher zu Toleranz zu bewegen, sondern nur, sein Geld zu retten. Nach der von ihm vorgetragenen Fassung wollte der Vater einfach jedem seiner um den Ring bittenden Söhne gerecht werden; nur er vermag den wahren zu erkennen. So geht es auch mit den Religionen.[17] In einer Handschrift des Novellino fügt der Autor oder Schreiber noch in aller Unschuld die Bemerkung hinzu, auch er selbst wisse die Antwort nicht, weswegen er sie seinen Zuhörern oder Lesern auch nicht sagen könne.[18]

Wenig später, etwa 1311, erschien der Ritterroman L'avventuroso Ciciliano, den der wenig begabte und kaum bekannte Busone de' Rafaelli da Gubbio († 1350) verfasste. In einer ihm angefügten „osservazione" wird praktisch dieselbe Geschichte erzählt: Der Sultan heißt nun Saladin, und auch er stellt die Frage nach der besten Religion, um den Juden wegen der erwarteten Beleidigung um sein Vermögen bringen zu können. Busone hatte engen Umgang mit dem römischen Juden Manoello, der Lieder in Hebräisch und Italienisch schrieb, was zu der Vermutung führte, er habe die Parabel von diesem gehört. Das wäre möglich, da dieser anscheinend sehr weltlich eingestellte Dichter (man erinnert sich an Cecco Angioleri († 1312)) einerseits den drei Religionen als Agnostiker gegenüberstand, andererseits für Toleranz eintrat.[19] Allerdings gleicht Busones Version weitestgehend der Erzählung im Novellino, so dass eine italienische Traditionskette wahrscheinlich erscheint.[20]

Von Busone wiederum dürfte Boccaccio die Geschichte kennengelernt haben, die er nun wesentlich spannender erzählt, als die anderen mittelalterlichen Autoren. „Jahre und Jahrzehnte geben keinen Maßstab, um die Entfernung Busones von Boccaccio zu messen."[21] Aber inhaltlich geht es abermals um das Nämliche, wie im Novellino, was

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[17] Il Novellino 73, ed. G. Manganelli, Milano 1975, 83 f.

[18] Paris, Poèmes et légendes, 149.

[19] Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas, 64 ff. Dieser hält die epikuräisch-agnostischen Aussagen Manoellos für Ironie und bescheinigt ihm eine naturreligiöse Frömmigkeit.

[20] Zum Vergleich Novellino — Decameron s. A. Poalella, Strategie discorsive e retoriche, Lingua e stile 16, 1981, 297–315.

[21] Landau, Die Quellen des Decameron, 182.

schon die Überschrift verrät: „Melchisedeck giudeo con una novella di tre anelle cessa un gran pericolo dal Saladino apparecchiatogli"[22] (Der Jude Melchisedech entgeht mit einer Erzählung von drei Ringen einer großen Gefahr, die ihm Saladin bereitete). Was die Novelle lehren will, ist in der einleitenden Wendung an die Zuhörer ausdrücklich gesagt, nämlich: „forse più caute diverrete nelle risposte alle quistioni che fàtte vi fossero" (Vielleicht werdet Ihr vorsichtiger, wenn Ihr Fragen beantwortet, die man Euch stellt). Es geht demnach um die Tugend des „senno", der den Weisen aus größten Gefahren befreit und „di consolazion sia cagione…" (Trost bzw. Vorwand). „il senno" (aus dem Germanischen über das Französische oder Provenzalische ins Italienische aufgenommen, vgl. deutsch ‚Sinn') ist aber nichts anderes als was man zu Lessings Zeiten ‚Witz' genannt hätte und was wir hier wohl am treffendsten mit ‚Schläue' übersetzen sollten, zumal das Wort im älteren Italienischen durchaus den Beigeschmack von ‚Verschlagenheit' haben konnte.

Auch Boccaccios Sultan befindet sich in Geldverlegenheiten, der Jude jedoch ist „sì avaro" (so geizig), dass er ihm nie freiwillig geholfen hätte. Da Saladin keine unmittelbare Gewalt anwenden will, „s'avvisò di fargli una forza da alcuna ragion colorata" (besann er sich, ihm gegenüber mit einem camouflierten Scheingrund Gewalt anzuwenden) und verfiel darauf, die bekannte Fangfrage zu stellen. Sein vermeintliches Opfer freilich bemerkt sofort die Falle und ersinnt eine Antwort, „per la quale preso non potesse essere, aguzzato lo 'ngegno" (aufgrund derer er mit seinem scharfen Witz nicht geschnappt werden konnte). Boccaccio hat also deutlich genug angegeben, worum es in der Geschichte geht: um „senno", um „ingegno". Dies demonstriert der Jude mit der Erzählung vom Vater, der seinen wertvollsten Ring als Zeichen des Erbvorrangs jeweils einem seiner Söhne überließ, bis er an einen Mann kam, der seine drei Söhne in gleicher Weise liebte. Deshalb ließ er zwei Kopien herstellen, die er selbst fast nicht vom Original zu unterscheiden vermochte. Jeder der Söhne erhielt vor seinem Hingang insgeheim einen der Ringe, alle waren unfähig, den wahren zu erkennen. Und so „si rimase la quistion, qual fosse il vero erede del padre, in

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[22] Giovanni Boccaccio, Decameron, ed. M. Marti u. E. Ceva Valla, Milano, 3. Aufl. 1979, I, 44 ff.

pendente, ed ancor pende" (blieb die Frage, wer der wahre Erbe des Vaters sei, in Schwebe, und in Schwebe ist sie nach wie vor). Und eben dasselbe gilt von den drei Religionen. Damit hatte Melchisedech sich aus der Schlinge gezogen, und der Herrscher eröffnete ihm, was er geplant hatte, wenn er ihm nicht „sì discretamente" geantwortet hätte. Der Jude stellt daraufhin ‚freiwillig' sein Vermögen zur Verfügung, Saladin zahlt das Darlehen korrekt zurück und belohnt ihn — immerhin — ehrenvoll mit seiner Freundschaft (sogar von gegenseitiger Sympathie hat man gesprochen [23]). Aber halten wir fest: Es ist die Geschichte einer Aporie, die hier erzählt wird, eingebettet in die Geschichte der durch eine kluge Antwort sich wandelnden Beziehung zwischen zwei Individuen. Es gibt im Text Boccaccios nicht den leisesten Hinweis darauf, dass auch die jeweiligen Religionsgemeinschaften in das nun freundschaftliche Verhältnis miteinbezogen sein sollten, gibt auch hier keine Toleranz-Forderung, wie dies noch im 2000 erschienen Lessing-Handbuch von Monika Fick anscheinend nahegelegt wird.[24]

Fassen wir zusammen: In den ersten uns bekannten mittelalterlichen Texten wird die Parabel zur Qualifizierung des Christentums als einzig wahre Religion erzählt. In der italienischen Novellistik geht es dann primär darum zu zeigen, wie eine kluge Antwort aus einer scheinbar ausweglosen Situation rettet. Keineswegs können die Ringparabeln des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts als metaphorische Aufforderungen zu religiöser Toleranz qualifiziert werden, sie sind vielmehr Apologien des Christentums oder Formulierungen einer Aporie.[25]

Was nun diese Aporie betrifft: Kann es denn sein, dass in einer Epoche, die zurecht als ‚Zeitalter des Glaubens' bezeichnet wird, jene eintausend Jahre, die wir unvorsichtigerweise mit dem einen Begriff ‚Mittelalter' zu umfangen meinen, so explizit die Unentscheidbarkeit zwischen den Wahrheitsansprüchen der drei Religionen formuliert wurde? Allerdings, denn trotz aller Verfolgung und Zensur gibt es in den Quellen der Zeit eine Fülle von Hinweisen, die es unbestreitbar machen, dass auch damals

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[23] Betont von S. Battaglia, La coscienza letteraria del Medioevo, Napoli 1965, 574.

[24] Monika Fick, Lessing-Handbuch, Stuttgart 2000, 403.

[25] Auf spätere Fassungen, die Lessing offenbar unbekannt blieben, wie im Esopo des Francesco del Tuppo (15. Jh.) oder in William Painter's, The Palace of Pleasures (16. Jh.), gehe ich nicht ein.

Skepsis, Agnostizismus und Unglaube bis hin zu explizitem Atheismus durchaus existierten. Punktuell nur freilich, nicht als geistesgeschichtliche Strömungen wie in der Neuzeit.[26]

Bekanntestes Beispiel sind die diesbezüglichen Überlegungen des Staufer-Kaisers Friedrich II. († 1250). Er ging davon aus, dass alle drei zur Diskussion stehenden Religionen (im Unterschied etwa zur römischen oder germanischen) Offenbarungsreligionen sind, die auf einen bestimmten Charismatiker zurückgehen, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed. Aber vielleicht hat in Wahrheit zu keinem von ihnen Gott je gesprochen? Friedrich soll — nach der Propaganda der ihm feindlichen päpstlichen Autoren wohlgemerkt — Moses, Jesus und Mohammed als Betrüger an der Menschheit bezeichnet haben (was er natürlich sogleich dementierte):[27] *iste rex pestilentie a tribus barattatoribus, ut eius verbis utamur, scilicet Christo Iesu, Moyse et Machometo, totum mundum fuisse deceptum… mentiri presumpsit…*[28] (Dieser verpestete König nahm es sich heraus, lügnerisch zu behaupten, die ganze Welt sei von drei Betrügern getäuscht worden, nämlich von Jesus Christus, Moses und Mohammed). Es gibt allerdings noch eine ganze Liste von anderen Denkern, denen dieses Dictum zugeschrieben wurde, und bald glaubte man an die Existenz eines Buches dieses Inhalts. Im 16. Jahrhundert wurde es wirklich geschrieben; Königin Christine von Schweden ließ viele Bibliotheken danach durchsuchen, jedoch vergebens.[29]

Nun war Kaiser Friedrich II. zweifellos eine exzeptionelle Gestalt, aber auch ein orthodoxer Zeitgenosse wie der Dichter Freidank spiegelt die genannte Aporie wider:

> Wer mac den strît gescheiden
> under kristen, juden, heiden

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[26] Peter Dinzelbacher, Étude sur l'incroyance à l'époque de la foi, Revue des sciences religieuses 73, 1999, 42–79.

[27] Andrea Sommerlechner, Stupor mundi. Kaiser Friederich II. und die mittelalterliche Geschichtsschreibung, Wien 1999, 139, 143, 446.

[28] Übersetzung bei Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas, 145 ff.

[29] Die Geschichte der Zuschreibungen des Dictums von den drei Betrügern bzw. eines Traktats darüber behandeln ausführlich F. Berriot, Athéismes et athéistes au XVIᵉ siècle en France, Lille 1976, 305–590 und L. Guerci, Il celebre e raro "Trattato de' tre impostori", Alessandria 1996.

wan got, der sie geschaffen hât
und alliu dinc ân iemens rât?[30]

Er ist dann zwar — wie das gesamte Mittelalter[31] — überzeugt, dass
nur Christen vor der Hölle gerettet werden können, hat aber immerhin
das Problem bemerkt, wundert sich auch darüber, wieso die Christen
trotz ihres Vorrangs von den ‚Heiden' (d.h. Muslimen) besiegt werden
können, wie dies immer wieder auf ihren Kreuzzügen der Fall war.

Diese Aporie kommt auch in anderen mittelalterlichen Legenden
zum Ausdruck. Gerade Saladin, der „fromme Heide", so heißt es in der
Weltchronik des Jans von Wien (gen. Jansen Enikel, um 1280), habe in
seinem Testament, da er nicht herausbekommen konnte, ob Allah,
Jahwe oder Christus „der tiurst were", sein kostbarstes Kleinod, einen
Saphirtisch, in drei Teile zerhauen, um sicherheitshalber jede der Glau-
bensgemeinschaften mit einem gleich großen Stück zu bedenken.[32]
Bemerkenswert ist hier, dass ein katholischer Geschichtsschreiber ein-
gehend eine Situation schildert, in der keine der Religionen bevorzugt
wird, da der muslimische Protagonist an allen dreien zweifelt („ich ir
aller zwîfel hân"). Die schriftliche Quelle, auf die sich Jans beruft, ist
leider nicht bekannt.[33]

Man darf also sagen, dass die Formulierung der bewussten Aporie
selbst im christlichen Mittelalter verschiedentlich möglich war, und
gerade das taten auch jene italienischen Autoren, die wir zitiert haben.
Die moderne Sekundärliteratur stellt die mittelalterlichen Fassungen der
Ringparabel regelmäßig wesentlich idealistischer dar,[34] als die Texte selbst
dies erlauben, nämlich als Aufrufe zu Toleranz. Eine solche Auffassung ist
m.E. jedoch philologische Eisegesis unter dem Eindruck der Lessing'schen
Parabel, nicht aber quellengerechte Exegesis. Das Toleranzthema findet

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[30] Wer vermag den Streit zwischen Christen, Juden und Heiden zu entscheiden außer
Gott, der sie und alles ohne jemandes Rat geschaffen hat? Bescheidenheit 6, 11 ff., hg.
v. Ernst Bezzenberger, Halle 1872.

[31] Peter Dinzelbacher, Die letzten Dinge. Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer im Mittelalter,
Freiburg 1999, 127 ff.

[32] Weltchronik vs. 26551–26676: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Dt. Chroniken
3, 518 ff.

[33] Albrecht Classen, Toleranz im späten 13. Jahrhundert, mit besonderer Berücksich-
tigung von Jans von Wien und Ramon Llull, Mediaevistik 17, 2004, 25–55.

[34] Z.B. Riez, J., Il Novellino, Stuttgart 1988, 275 ; Classen, pass.

sich in den mittelalterlichen Parabel-Texten schlicht und einfach nicht ausgesprochen. Es sei denn, man will eine stillschweigende Toleranz bereits in dem Fazit erkennen, dass man über Religion eigentlich nicht streiten könne — aber impliziert die Formulierung eines unlösbaren Problems bereits den Aufruf, es bei dieser Situation zu belassen? Vielmehr erscheinen m.E. die in den letzten Jahren erschienenen Studien, die tatsächlich religiöse Toleranzideale im christlichen Mittelalter feststellen zu können meinen, wenig anderes als rückwärtsgewandte Wunschprojektionen zu sein, idealistische, aber den Quellen nicht entsprechende Reaktionen nicht zuletzt auf die aktuelle Welle religiöser Intoleranz vonseiten islamischer Gläubiger, die Europa zum ersten Mal nach dem Ende der großen Religionskriege wieder mit dem ungeheuren Aggressionspotential konfrontiert, die habituell jeder von einer Transzendenz ausgehenden Weltanschauung innewohnt, welche für sich den Besitz einer unhinterfragbaren Wahrheit beansprucht. Es besteht m.E. ein grundlegendes perzeptives Problem in der heutigen westlichen Sicht von Religion, das historisch eben aus den 2000 hinter uns liegenden Jahre der Einübung durch das Christentum erwachsen ist: Die Kategorie Religion an sich — welche auch immer es im Konkreten sei — wird prinzipiell und a priori regelmäßig positiv konnotiert, anstatt, wie schon ein flüchtiger Blick in die Kirchengeschichte zeigen müßte, eindeutig ambivalent.

Von Aporie zur Toleranz

Wenn nun die mittelalterlichen Ringparabeln westlicher Provenienz keine Aufrufe zu religiösem Respekt vor Andersgläubigen waren, erhebt sich die Frage: Gab es denn überhaupt religiöse Toleranz im Mittelalter?[35] Lassen wir einen eminenten katholischen Mediävisten zu Worte

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[35]) Vgl. zur Übersicht: O. Lellek, Toleranz, Lexikon des Mittelalters VIII/4, 1996, 849 f. und für die Neuzeit D. Teichert, Toleranz, Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie IV, 1996, 316 ff. Zu einem der einflußreichsten Kirchenschriftsteller des Mittelalters in dieser Hinsicht vgl. Peter Dinzelbacher, Toleranz bei Bernhard von Clairvaux?, Cistercienser Chronik 109, 2002, 9–29. Zum generellen Hintergrund der Fremdheit anderer Religionen und Kulturen im Mittelalter vgl. Albrecht Classen, ed., Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages, New York 2002.

kommen, den Prorektor der Universität vom Heiligen Herzen in Mailand und Mitglied der päpstlichen Kommission für Geschichtswissenschaften, Mons. Pietro Zerbi: Angesichts des geschlossenen Weltbildes des Mittelalters „è logica e inevitabile la ‚intolleranza‘ religiosa: in un mondo tanto unitario, infatti, non sembra proprio esservi spazio per posizioni alternative o dissenzienti“.[36] Und fügen wir die Worte des hervorragenden protestantischen Dogmenhistorikers Ernst Benz hinzu: „Das Christentum hat von Anfang an eine Tendenz zur Intoleranz, die in seinem religiösen Selbstbewußtsein begründet ist... Christsein ist ‚Wandeln in der Wahrheit‘ (3. Joh 4), die christliche Verkündigung ist ‚der Weg der Wahrheit‘ (2 Petr 2,2,). Der Wahrheit gegenüber gibt es keine Indifferenz. Wer die Wahrheit nicht anerkennt, ist ‚Feind des Kreuzes Christi‘ (Phil 3,18)... ‚Wer nicht für mich ist, der ist wider mich‘ (Matth 12,30)... Die Mission des Christentums zielte auf eine Beseitigung des Heidentums, eine Vernichtung seiner Institutionen, seiner Tempel, seiner Überlieferung und der auf ihm beruhenden Lebensordnung. Nach seinem Sieg und seiner Ausstattung mit äußeren Machtmitteln hat es die heidnischen Religionen im Bereich des gesamten Imperium Romanum vollständig beseitigt und nur noch Ruinen übrig gelassen.“[37] Die von Benz durchgeführte Analyse bewahrheitet sich auch auf einem Gang durch die weitere Geschichte: Intoleranz gegenüber allen anderen sog. primitiven Religionen, die im Zuge der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Bekehrung sowie der der Neuen Welt, die oft eine Bekehrung durch das Schwert war, ausgerottet wurden, Intoleranz genauso gegen die Buchreligion des Islam (Reconquista, Kreuzzüge), Intoleranz gegen die jüdische Mutterreligion und damit Grundlage nicht nur der Pogrome des Spätmittelalters und der Neuzeit, sondern auch des Holocaust — wie wiederum kein Gegner, sondern ein sich selbst als „engagierter Katholik“ verstehender Historiker, Friedrich Heer, gezeigt hat.[38] Die Situation hatte sich, verglichen mit der der Antike, spätestens mit der Religionsgesetzgebung in der 2. Hälfte des 4. Jahrhunderts,[39] völlig geändert.

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[36] Pietro Zerbi, Medioevo — tolleranza o intolleranza religiosa? In id., ‚Ecclesia in hoc mundo posita‘, Milano 1993, 201–214, 209.

[37] Ernst Benz, Beschreibung des Christentums, München 1975, 158.

[38] Der Glaube des Adolf Hitler, München/Esslingen 1968; Gottes erste Liebe, Berlin 1981.

[39] Vgl. Zuletzt Peter Dinzelbacher u. Werner Heinz, Europa in der Spätantike, Darmstadt 2007, 42 ff.

Solches freilich will man in unserer Zeit, so scheint mir, schlichtweg nicht wahrhaben, würde es doch der seit etwa zwei Dezennien deutlich spürbaren Aufwertung des Mittelalters und der Betonung seiner Vielfalt widersprechen. Vor wenigen Jahren z.B. haben sich dem Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte angehörige Historiker mit Eifer darum bemüht, in allen möglichen historischen Situationen doch Elemente religiöser Toleranz in jener Epoche zu finden — aber ob in den Kreuzfahrerstaaten des Nahen Ostens oder dem sizilianischen Reich der Normannen und Staufer — es waren stets nur die Zwänge konkreten Zusammenlebens, die die Angehörigen der unterschiedlichen Religionen einander ertragen, tolerieren, ließ, wie es nur ökonomische Vorteile und biblisch begründete Missionshoffnungen waren, die die Christen jüdische Bürger in ihrer Umgebung ertragen ließen, so lange nicht gerade ein Herrscher ihr Geld benötigte oder das Volk einen Sündenbock (vgl. Anm. 44).

Aber nirgendwo gab es Toleranz aufgrund der Anerkennung einer menschlichen Gleichwertigkeit! Sie kam in der mittelalterlichen Theologie oder Philosophie, Produkt einer Ständegesellschaft, nicht vor. Und Nicolaus Cusanus? — wird man sofort einwenden. Hat er nicht 1453 unter dem Schock der Eroberung Konstantinopels in seiner utopischen Abhandlung *De pace fidei*[40] Vertreter von 17 verschiedenen Religionen bzw. Völkern zu einem Konzil im Himmel versammelt, um allen Glaubenskriegen ein Ende zu bereiten? Eben diesen Text zu edieren, hat doch Lessing kurz vor seinem Tode geplant![41]

Die verschiedenen Völker, sagt der Kusaner in dieser Schrift, verwechseln die von ihren jeweiligen Propheten aufgestellten Gesetze mit der Wahrheit selbst. Dieser entspricht die *eine* Religion, auch wenn es eine Vielzahl an Kulten gibt. Nur meinte Cusanus mit der einen Religion eindeutig die katholische, und die Versammlung dient eben dazu, alle durch den Logos belehren zu lassen, dass der christliche der von allen erstrebte und zu erstrebende Glaube sei! Denn Christus sei auch in den anderen Religionen impliziert, ihre Anhänger würde dies bloß nicht verstehen. Demgemäß werden in *De pace fidei* am ausführlichsten Fragen der Christologie und Trinitätsdogmatik behandelt. Wo ist Toleranz, wenn der Autor fordert, die Götterbilder der Polytheisten

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[40] Jörgen Pedersen, The Unity of Religion and Universal Peace, in Brian McGuire ed., War and Peace in the Middle Ages, Copenhagen 1987, 195–215.

[41] De pace fidei, ed. R. Klibansky u. H. Bascour, London 1956, xliii f.

müssen zerstört werden? Auch in der sieben Jahre später geschriebenen
Cribratio Alkorani ging es ihm darum, Muslime zu Christen zu konver-
tieren, nicht aber, ihre Religion anzuerkennen. Aus dem nämlichen
missionarischen Grund erarbeitete damals ein Freund des Kardinals,
der Theologe und Geschichtsschreiber Johannes von Segovia, dem
Cusanus seine Werk von 1453 zugesandt hatte, eine lateinisch- und
spanischsprachige Ausgabe des Korans.[42]

Immerhin finden sich bei Nicolaus für das Mittelalter recht unge-
wöhnliche Überlegungen: Moses habe einen Weg zur Erkenntnis des
Guten, also zu Gott, beschrieben, Jesus ihn vervollkommnet, und
Mohammed schilderte denselben, aber in vereinfachter Form.[43] In dem
als Traumvision gestalteten Werk *De pace fidei* liest man, auch Nicht-
christen strebten nach Gott, so dass es eine Übereinstimmung ihrer
Weisen gibt. Auch könne eine Vielfalt an Riten bestehen, doch nur
eine zugrundeliegende Religion.[44] Diese *religio una in rituum varietate*
(eine Religion bei Unterschiedlichkeit der Riten) mag als eschatolo-
gische Utopie verstanden werden, da Erkenntnis für den Menschen, so
der Kusaner, nur einen unendlichen Prozeß darstellt — ein Konzep-
tion, die doch ein wenig an die Lessingsche Erziehung des Menschen-
geschlechts erinnert. „...die historischen Religionen sind — wenn
auch auf unterschiedliche Weise — nur Konjekturen, Annäherungen,
Teilhaben an dem Einen und Wahren... alle auf dem Weg zu dem
einen Ziel...".[45] Diese *una religio* existiert aber eben bereits — und nur
im Christentum.

Vor allem ist nicht zu vergessen, dass derselbe immer wieder als Ver-
treter religiöser Duldsamkeit gepriesene Cusanus 1431 in einer Predigt
über den Glauben ausdrücklich sagte, das jeder Widerstand gegen den
Katholizismus *error est igne et ferro exstirpandus*[46] (ein mit Feuer und
Schwert auszurottender Irrtum ist), dass derselbe Cusanus sich in allen
die Hussiten betreffenden Akten „als verbissener Widersacher der böh-

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[42] Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique 8/1, 819.

[43] *Cribratio, prologus.*

[44] Georg Wieland, Das Eigene und das Andere, in Alexander Patschovsky u. Harald
Zimmermann (Hgg.), Toleranz im Mittelalter (Vorträge und Forschungen 45), Sig-
maringen 1998, 11–25, 22.

[45] Ebd. 23.

[46] Opera omnia XVI, Hamburg 1970, 62 f.

mischen Reformation präsentierte"‚[47] der keine Variationen innerhalb
des Christentums anerkennen wollte, dass er schließlich 1464 beschäf-
tigt mit der Vorbereitung eines Kreuzzugs gegen die Türken gestorben
ist. Zu den Vorläufern der Aufklärung, so meint auch Karl Jaspers,[48]
kann man den Kardinal keineswegs zählen.

Auch die viel zitierten Religionsgespräche der mittelalterlichen Lite-
ratur, wie wir sie namentlich von Peter Abaelard und Ramon Llull
besitzen, gehen trotz ihrer zunächst anscheinend gleichberechtigten
Situation regelmäßig darauf hinaus, die Überlegenheit des Christen-
tums zu beweisen. Llull freilich, wiewohl überzeugter Christ und Ange-
höriger des Dritten Franziskanerordens, ließ exzeptioneller Weise
immerhin den Ausgang offen.[49] Sein Libre del Gentil e los tres savis
(um 1275) ist somit wohl die fairste Religionsdiskussion, die das Mit-
telalter hervorgebracht hat, vergleichbar nur mit der knapp zehn Jahre
später entstandenen Untersuchung über die drei Religionen des in Bag-
dad lebenden Ibn Kammuna. Dieser schrieb in einer Zeit, in der in
dieser Stadt Religionsfreiheit und -vielfalt herrschte, nämlich in der
der kurzen und ansonsten überaus blutigen Mongolenherrschaft.[50] Zu
Llull muß man freilich ebenfalls bemerken, dass er später, nach zwei
lebensgefährlichen Aufenthalten in Nordafrika, seine Toleranz aufgab
und sich gegen Ende seines Lebens (und in Analogie zu Cusanus) sogar
für die Organisation eines neuen Kreuzzuges einsetzte.

Auch ein ähnlicher Text des Renaissance-Mathematikers Cardano,
betitelt *De subtilitate*, den Lessing wegen zu positiver Darstellung des
Christentums kritisierte, aber gegen den Vorwurf des Atheismus vertei-
digte, steht in dieser Tradition. Immerhin stellen solche Colloquien
fiktionale, vielleicht utopische Situationen dar, die einen friedlichen
Austausch zwischen Weisen der konkurrierenden Religionsgemein-
schaften vorführen.

Jene Religionsgespräche schließlich, die faktisch zwischen Katho-
liken einerseits, Ketzern, Orthodoxen, Juden und Muslimen anderer-
seits geführt wurden, waren aus Problemen der Praxis erwachsen,

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[47] Frantisek Smahel, Pax externa et interna, in Patschovsky u. Zimmermann, Toleranz
im Mittelalter, 221–273, 262.
[48] Nicolaus Cusanus, München 1964, 219 ff.
[49] Heinrich Schmidinger (Hg.), Wege zur Toleranz, Darmstadt 2003, 51 ff.
[50] Ebd. 45 ff.

blieben in der Regel ohne Ergebnis und führten kaum je zu ehrlicher Respektierung der Gegner.[51] Dienten sie doch „meist weniger der Verständigung als der Widerlegung und Demütigung der jeweils Andersgläubigen".[52] Immerhin: Solange man miteinander diskutierte, verzichtete man auf Gewalt.

Einen echten Aufruf zu religiöser Toleranz formulierte allerdings zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts der fränkische Epiker Wolfram von Eschenbach. Dieser Intellektuelle, eine Ausnahmegestalt, propagierte Heiden gegenüber in seinem Willehalm, einem von Kampfszenen überfüllten Epos aus dem Karls-Zyklus, eine für seine Zuhörer und Leser wohl schockierende Toleranz und problematisierte so die Kreuzfahrer-Ideologie:[53]

> die nie toufes künde
> enpfiengen, ist daz sünde,
> daz man die sluoc alsam ein vihe?
> grôzer sünde ich drumbe gihe:
> ez ist gar gotes hantgetât,
> zwuo und sibenzec sprâche, di er hât.

> Die wie ein Vieh zu erschlagen, die nie von der Taufe Kunde bekamen, ist das Sünde? Große Sünde, sage ich darum: All die zweiundsiebzig Sprachen [Völker], die er hat, sind doch Gottes Schöpfung!

Begründet wird diese Haltung — es sind Worte der zum Christentum konvertierten Heidin Gyburc — mit dem Hinweis, daß ja auch alle Väter des Alten Testamentes, Elias, Enoch, Noah, Hiob…, Heiden waren und dennoch gerettet wurden, wie auch später die Heiligen drei Könige, von denen Gott die ersten Gaben zu empfangen geruhte. Aber noch mehr:

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[51] U. Matteijiet u.a., Religionsgespräche: LexMA VII/4, 1994, 691–696; M. Lutz-Bachmann u. A. Fidora (Hgg.), Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter, Darmstadt 2004.

[52] Schmidinger, Wege zur Toleranz, 38.

[53] Ähnlich werden im anonymen Reinfried von Braunschweig (E. 13. Jh.) Zwangsbekehrung und Schwertmission deutlich abgelehnt — in Übereinstimmung mit dem kirchlichen Recht, wenn auch nicht mit der kirchlichen Praxis.

swaz müeter her sît Even zît
kint gebâren, âne strît
gar heidenschaft was ir geburt…

Was seit Evas Zeiten Mütter an Kindern auf die Welt brachten, diese Nachkommen waren unbestreitbar heidnisch…

So waren wir alle einmal Heiden. Deshalb fordert Gyburc die Krieger auf:

ob iu got sigenunft dort gît,
lâts iu erbarmen ime strît!…

Wenn euch Gott dort den Sieg gewährt, lasst euch im Streit erbarmen…

„Die Rede Gyburcs bleibt insofern wirkungslos, als die Christen in der folgenden Schlacht ein Massaker unter den Heiden anrichten (in der geschichtlichen Realität hatte zwanzig Jahre zuvor Richard Löwenherz dreitausend wehrlose Araber niedermetzeln lassen)…"[54] Und eben während Wolfram solches formulierte, waren nordfranzösische Katholiken mit Feuereifer und päpstlichem Segen dabei, die Ketzerei der südfranzösischen Katharer in Blut und Flammen zu ertränken. Bald gab es die Heilige Inquisition als päpstliche Organisation zu ihrer Aufspürung, dann die großen Judenverfolgungen, wie sie seit dem Schwarzen Tod, der Europa verheerenden Pest von 1348/50, immer wieder ausbrechen sollten, schließlich den Wahn, die Christenheit sei von einer Sekte von Hexen in ihrer Existenz bedroht…

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[54] P. Nusser, Deutsche Literatur im Mittelalter, Stuttgart 1994, 224, 167 ff. — Vgl. zuletzt K. Kirchert, Heidenkrieg und christliche Schonung des Feindes. Widersprüchliches im Willehalm Wolframs von Eschenbach, Archiv f. d. Studium d. neueren Sprachen und Literaturen 146 (231), 1994, 258–270; U. Müller, Toleranz im Mittelalter? Eine Skizze zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem christlich-lateinischen Okzident und dem islamischen Orient, Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache 20, 1994, 209–236; A. Wells, Christliche Apologetik, die mittelhochdeutsche Silvesterlegende, Wolframs von Eschenbach ‚Willehalm', und die Toleranz gegenüber Andersgläubigen im Mittelalter, Mediaevistik 14, 2001, 179–223; J. Martin, Christen und Andersgläubige in Wolframs ‚Willehalm': Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum 133, 2004, 45–48; M. Przybilski, Giburgs Bitten, ebd. 49–60; Joachim Bumke, Wolfram von Eschenbach, 8. Aufl. Stuttgart 2004, 297 ff.

Aber es finden sich noch erstaunlichere Ansätze zu einer Akzeptanz des Islam, und zwar bei einem Papst, dem man dies keinesfalls zutrauen würde, dem hl. Gregor VII. Er, die Hauptfigur des mit viel Blutvergießen geführten Investiturstreits, formulierte im Jahre 1076 gegenüber dem Emir von Bugia, an-Nasir, der gute Beziehungen sowohl zu den unter seiner Herrschaft lebenden Katholiken als auch zu Rom suchte, eine geradezu unglaublichen Anerkennung der feindlichen Religion, gegen die er im übrigen einen Kreuzzug plante.[55] Christen und Muslime sollten einander freundlich begegnen, denn „wir glauben an und bekennen einen Gott, wenn auch auf verschieden Art, und wir preisen und verehren ihn täglich als den Schöpfer der Zeiten und den Lenker dieser Welt… Denn Gott weiß, wir lieben Dich rein zur Ehre Gottes und wünschen Dein Heil und Dein Wohlergehen im gegenwärtigen Leben und in dem, das da kommen wird, und wir flehen mit unserem Herzen und unseren Lippen, dass Gott Dich, nach einem langen Erdenleben, in den gesegneten Schoß des hochheiligen Patriarchen Abraham bringen möge."[56] Das mag weitgehend Diplomatie im Sinne der in Bugia lebenden Christen gewesen sein[57] — aber offenbar konnte selbst Gregor sich bereits eine Art Naturreligion vorstellen.

Weder Wolfram von Eschenbach noch Ramon Llull und schon gar nicht Papst Gregor haben irgendwie nachweisbar den Lauf der Geschichte im Sinne von Toleranz beeinflusst. Sie waren in den zitierten Äußerungen untypisch für ihre Epoche, Vorläufer der Neuzeit, die, mit Benedetto Croce gesprochen, nicht dafür gesorgt hatten, im richtigen Zeitalter geboren zu werden. Typisch für ‚das' Mittelalter ist dagegen etwa die Lehrauskunft, die der Kanzler von Notre Dame, Petrus Comestor, erteilte, als ihn der Patriarch von Jerusalem über die Vereinbarkeit des Heidenkampfes mit Christi Gebot „Liebe deine Feinde" befragte. *funde sanguinem inimicorum Christi* (vergieße das Blut der Feinde Christi), lautet sie![58] Und das wurde praktiziert.

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[55] The Crusades: An Encyclopedia, Hg. Alan V. Murray, Santa Barbara, CA, 2006, 545 ff.

[56] Registrum 3, 21, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epp. Sel. 2, 287 f.

[57] So im Prinzip H. Cowdrey, Pope Gregory VII, Oxford 1998, 492 ff. (die heute maßgebliche Biographie Gregors); positiver z.B. A. Gfrörer, Pabst Gregorius VII. und sein Zeitalter IV, Schaffhausen 1859, 581 f. Vgl. generell John V. Tolan, Hg., Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam, New York 2000.

[58] Zit. Peter Dinzelbacher, Bernhard von Clairvaux, Darmstadt 1998, 305.

Wenn wir die Situation nun mit Lessings Epoche kontrastieren, in der religiöse Toleranz auf den Fahnen der Aufklärer geschrieben stand, ist stichwortartig daran zu erinnern, was in den zwischenliegenden Jahrhunderten geschehen war: Die Renaissance entdeckte die Würde des Menschen, betonte die Implikation der Selbstbestimmung aufgrund seines Vernunftvermögens (Manetti, Pico della Mirandola). Die Frühneuzeit entwickelte im Rückgriff u.a. auf die Stoa die theoretische Konzeption der Gleichheit aller Menschen, so im Naturrecht (Grotius, Pufendorf) und in der Gesellschaftslehre (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau). Die Aufklärung war davon überzeugt, dass die Vernunft allen Menschen gemeinsam sei, weswegen sie Selbstverantwortung beanspruchen dürften. Diese musste sich auch auf Glauben und Kultus erstrecken.

Eine entsprechende Diskussion existierte bereits im Zeitalter der Reformation, blieb jedoch bescheiden.[59] Erst die historische Erfahrung der Religionskriege zwang jedoch auch aus der jeweiligen Orthodoxie kommende Denker und Politiker, religiöse Toleranz wirklich zum Thema zu machen, so in den Niederlanden der Kampf der protestantischen Bevölkerung gegen die katholische Herrschaft, in Frankreich die Hugenottenkriege, in Deutschland der Dreißigjährige Krieg. In überreichem Maß lehrten diese Katastrophen, oder, mit Lessing zu sprechen:

> die fromme Raserei,
> Den bessern Gott zu haben, diesen bessern
> Der ganzen Welt als besten aufzudringen,[60]

wie sehr dem Christentum auch innerchristlich Gewalt inhärent ist. Und nicht nur dem Christentum! Was Gottsched im Alter von 25 Jahren in seiner V. Akademischen Rede schrieb, gehört zu den historischen Erkenntnissen, die immer wieder unterdrückt werden und deshalb nicht oft genug zitiert werden können: „Das meiste Blut, so jemals die Erde in sich getrunken hat, ist durch die Religion vergossen worden. Ich sage noch mehr! Die Religion allein hat mehr Menschen gefressen, als das Schwert jemals verzehret hat."[61] Das traf für die europäische

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[59] Hans Guggisberg, Toleration, The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation IV, Oxford 1996, 160–163.

[60] Werke, ed. Riemann II, 306.

[61] Schmidinger, Wege zur Toleranz, 243.

Geschichte zwischen Völkerwanderung und Napoleonischen Kriegen präzise zu.

In der Praxis sollte freilich nur die Trennung von Kirche und Staat, wie sie zunächst in einigen überseeischen Kolonien wie Rhode Island (1663) und Pennsylvania (1681) erfolgte, Religionsfreiheit zu einem gelebten Grundsatz machen.[62] Friedrichs II. von Preußen berühmte Weisung an sein Kabinett, alle Religionen zu tolerieren und jeden nach seiner Fasson selig werden zu lassen,[63] ist die bekannteste Formulierung der Lessingzeit. Frühere konsequente Entwürfe einer irdischen, sozialen und religiösen Gleichheit waren auf Splittergruppen wie etwa deutsche Wiedertäufer oder englische Levellers beschränkt geblieben. Und auch alles, was an Toleranz später kam, war fast stets ‚taktische Toleranz', die letztlich den eigenen Standort nicht infrage stellt, wiewohl sie den anderer duldet.[64]

Lessing hat das Ideal religiöser Duldsamkeit v.a. mittels zweier Medien gefördert, die er beide in bekannter Meisterschaft einzusetzen verstand: Zum einen mittels der literarischen Invektive — der Fragmentstreit v.a. mit Hauptpastor Götze im Gefolge der Veröffentlichung von Reimarus' Offenbarungskritik in den Wolfenbütteler Beiträgen, „der umfangreichste, wirkungsvollste und bedeutendste theologisch-politische Krach der deutschen Aufklärung".[65] Und zum anderen mittels des Schauspiels. Darin sah er selbst die beste Möglichkeit, das von seinem Herrn, Herzog Karl von Braunschweig, am 17. August 1778 erlassene Publikationsverbot zu religiösen Fragen zu umgehen. So nahm er das von ihm schon in dem Lustspiel Die Juden dramatisierte Toleranz-Thema wieder auf, das er bereits als Zwanzigjähriger auf die Bühne gebracht hatte. Bewundert viel und viel gescholten, sollte der 1779 vollendete Nathan der Weise *das* Toleranzstück des europäischen Theaters schlechthin werden.

„Nathans Märchen von den drei Ringen, welches vollendet hingeworfen, bis ins Mark entzückend trifft"[66] (Friedrich Schlegel 1797),

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[62] Benz, Beschreibung des Christentums, 162.

[63] Zit. Joachim Desch, Taktische und praktische Toleranz, in Peter Freimark u.a. (Hg.), Lessing und die Toleranz, München 1986, 158–173, 158.

[64] Ebd. 163.

[65] William Boehart, Zur Öffentlichkeitsstruktur des Streites um die Wolfenbütteler Fragmente, in Freimark, Lessing und die Toleranz, 146–157, 146.

[66] Epping u. Jäger, ‚Nathan der Weise', 137.

steht bekanntlich genau in der Mitte des Stücks. Man wird die Möglichkeit noch weiterer mitspielender Anregungen bei der Gestaltung von Einzelheiten nicht ausschließen wollen (wie etwa die, der in hundert Farben spielende Edelstein im Ring könnte direkt aus dem Führer der Unschlüssigen des Maimonides kommen[67]), was aber wissen wir über die Entstehung der Ringparabel durch die Feder des Autors selbst? In einem Brief an seinen Bruder Karl vom 11. VIII. 1778 bezeichnet er das bereits „vor vielen Jahren" entworfene Schauspiel als auf dem Decamerone I, 3 basierend, wozu er noch „eine sehr interessante Episode dazu erfunden" habe.[68] Dies bestätigte er auch in dem nicht veröffentlichten Entwurf zum Nathan und im folgenden Jahr in einem Brief an Herder.[69]

Die Geschichte ist eng an Boccaccio angelehnt, und wesentliche Elemente bleiben bewahrt; inhaltlich etwa die nackte Drohung über des Juden Haupt, sollte er den Sultan mit seiner Antwort nicht zufrieden stellen,[70] formal das Duell der Listigen — noch Hugo von Hofmannsthal hielt „dies Einander-aufs-Wort-Lauern, Einander-die-Replik-Zuspielen,… dies Fechten mit dem Verstand",[71] das den italienischen Novellisten das Zentrale gewesen war, auch für das Wesentliche von Lessings Neugestaltung. Aber erst dieser war es, der die mittelalterliche Ringparabel von der Aporiemetapher zum Toleranzaufruf umfunktionierte!

Freilich ist es nicht eine Toleranz, die irgend jemand von der Position des vermeintlichen Besitzes der Wahrheit aus ausgewählten Andersdenkenden gewährt — wie es in der Praxis die Staaten des 18. Jahrhunderts den Juden gegenüber taten —, sondern es ist nach wie vor die Toleranz der Aporie, um nicht zu sagen des Agnostizismus. Lessings persönlichen Agnostizismus, bekannte er doch: „Nathans Gesinnung gegen alle positiven Religionen ist von jeher die meinige gewesen."[72] Und die lautete: „Jud' und Christ Und Muselmann und Parsi, alles ist Ihm eins."[73]

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[67] Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas, 169 f.

[68] Werke und Briefe, ed. Wilfried Barner, Frankfurt 1985 ff., XII, 185 f.

[69] Gesammelte Werke. Hrsg. von Paul Rilla 2. Aufl. Berlin/Weimar 1968, II, 322; Epping u. Jäger, ‚Nathan der Weise', 111. — Zu Lessing und dem Mittelalter vgl. Michel Henri Kowalewicz, Lessing et la culture du Moyen Age, Hildesheim 2003, der sich jedoch auf die Verteidigung des Berengar von Tours konzentriert.

[70] 3/7: Werke, ed. Riemann II, 327.

[71] Epping u. Jäger, ‚Nathan der Weise', 145.

[72] Werke, ed. Rilla II, 322.

[73] Werke, ed. Riemann II, 299.

Insofern liegt vielleicht ein Quäntchen Wahrheit in dem Urteil Schlegels, der den Nathan 1797 das „dramatisiertes Elementarbuch des höheren Zynismus"[74] nannte.

Als Innovationen Lessings gegenüber seiner Quelle hat man ganz richtig genannt: Der Vater liebt seine Söhne gleichermaßen, und auch er selbst vermag den ursprünglichen Ring nicht mehr zu identifizieren. Dazu kommt: Während im Novellino oder im Decamerone die Position der Fabel im Gesamtwerk ziemlich beliebig ist, ja sie sogar ohne weiteres fehlen könnte, entwickelt sich der Nathan auf sie als sein Zentrum hin und realisiert sich ihr Ethos in der Folge.[75] Der deutlichste Unterschied zu den mittelalterlichen Ringparabeln liegt jedoch darin, dass das Wesentliche des Religiösen sich nicht mehr daraus ergibt, ob es auf einer wahren Offenbarung beruht, sondern daraus, ob es zu richtigem Handeln bewegt! „Nicht die Übereinstimmung in den Meinungen, sondern die Übereinstimmung in tugendhaften Handlungen ist es, welche die Welt ruhig und glücklich macht",[76] hatte der Dichter 1751 in anderem Zusammenhang geschrieben. Mit dieser Forderung hat er auch die Positionen des Fragmenten-Streites überwunden.[77]

Nimmt man das Drama insgesamt, so machen die christlichen Figuren sicher keinen sympathischeren Eindruck als die Vertreter der anderen Religionen, im Gegenteil: Daria ist konversionswütig, Curd von Stauffen von verantwortungsloser Spontaneität. Und der Patriarch ein Inquisitor avant la lettre.[78] Hat Lessing nicht das Christentum als „das abscheulichste Gebäude des Unsinns, dessen Umsturz der Christ nur unter dem Vorwand, es zu unterbauen, fördern könne"[79] bezeichnet? Das ist eine Aussage, die sich nicht hinwegdiskutieren lässt. Sie erfolgte nicht, wie seine für die Öffentlichkeit bestimmten Schriften und Dramen, unter dem Zwang, vorsichtig oder ironisch formulieren

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[74] Epping u. Jäger, ‚Nathan der Weise', 139.

[75] Was nicht heißt, man dürfe die Parabel aus dem Text isolieren, da sie nur eine von mehreren Prüfungen darstellt, die Nathan durchzustehen hat: S. Atkins, Die Ringparabel in Lessings ‚Nathan der Weise', in K. Bohnen, ed., Lessings ‚Nathan der Weise', Darmstadt 1984, 155–167.

[76] Werke, hg. Herbert Göpfert, München 1970 ff., III, 55

[77] Peter J. Brenner, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Stuttgart 2000, 296.

[78] Es gab im späten 12. Jahrhundert noch nicht „die" Inquisition als päpstliche Institution.

[79] Brief an Mendelssohn vom 9. 1. 1771, in Werke, ed. Barner IX/2, 146.

zu müssen, sondern in einem Brief an Mendelssohn.[80] Hier konnte sich Lessings Gesinnung, die, wie eine Untersuchung seiner Äußerungen in seinen Werken zeigte, „die denkbar schärfste Ablehnung aller positiven Religionen" kennzeichnete,[81] ohne Rücksicht auf Zensur und negative Konsequenzen äußern. Insofern dürften Mehring und andere die ‚rechte' Lessinginterpretation als „Retter der Religion" (via Integration in die Aufklärung) zu Recht kritisiert haben.[82]

Auch Saladin zeigt sich keineswegs als dezidierter Muslim. Lessing sah ihn in dem Licht, in das ihn die von ihm übersetzte Geschichte der Kreuzzüge Voltaires stellte. Darin heißt es, dieser Herrscher habe testamentarisch gleichgroße Summen unter den Armen der drei Religionen austeilen lassen, „durch welche Verordnung er habe zu verstehen geben wollen, dass alle Menschen Brüder wären, und man, um ihnen beyzustehen, sich nicht darnach, was sie glaubten, sondern, was sie auszustehen hätten, erkundigen müsste."[83]

Was Lessing nicht so formulieren konnte, aber was ihm letztendlich vorschwebte, so Gerd Hillen, war „Toleranz als Instrument zur Beförderung der völligen Aufklärung der Menschheit",[84] Toleranz als Stufe der Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts, dürft man vielleicht hinzufügen. Glaubensinhalte — das „andächtig schwärmen" mit Nathans, des „aufgeklärten Deisten"[85] Worten — werden schlichtweg irrelevant gegenüber „gut handeln".[86] „Nicht die Wahrheit, in deren Besitz irgend ein Mensch ist, oder zu sein vermeint, sondern die aufrichtige Mühe, die er angewandt hat, hinter die Wahrheit zu kommen, macht den Wert des Menschen."[87] Dies heißt aber ebenfalls, ein Handeln auf- und einen Glauben abzuwerten. Würde diese Utopie je wahr, wäre sie auch das Ende jeder institutionalisierten Religion.

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[80] Vgl. Gerd Hillen, Toleranz und Wahrheit, in Freimark, Lessing und die Toleranz, 186–197, 192 f.

[81] G. Fittbogen, Die Religion Lessings, Leipzig 1923, 154.

[82] Nicola Merker, Hg., G. E. Lessing, Religione, Storia e Società, Messina 1973, 5 ff.

[83] Epping u. Jäger, ‚Nathan der Weise', 81.

[84] Hillen, Toleranz und Wahrheit, 195.

[85] Atkins, Die Ringparabel, 161.

[86] Nathan 1, 2, in Werke, ed. Riemann II, 274.

[87] Duplik, Werke, ed. Göpfert VIII, 33.

Sollte man hier nicht die durchaus authentische Einstellung des
Dichters würdigen? In den achtziger und neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahr-
hunderts hat man sowohl von judaistischer als auch islamwissenschaft-
licher Seite versucht, Lessings Religionsphilosophie in die Linie der
jeweils eigenen Tradition zu stellen. Kuschel z.B., vor ihm schon Kreft,[88]
jetzt wiederum Horsch,[89] sieht in Nathans Ergebenheit in Gott[90] und
der Anerkennung von jüdischer und christlicher Religion die Quelle
für Lessings Haltung in der Sure 5, 49 (48) des Korans, nach der Gott
verschiedene Religionen durchaus wollte, die miteinander im Tugend-
streben wetteifern sollten.[91] Muß man hier auf den Islam (das Wort
bedeutet: Gottergebenheit) zurückgreifen, als ob es keine autochthon
christliche Tradition gäbe, als ob Christus nie das „Dein Wille geschе-
he…" gesprochen hätte (Luk 22, 42; Mt 26, 39)? Niewöhner geht
davon aus, dass Lessing schon vor der Bekanntschaft mit Moses Men-
delssohn, der ja auch die Seligkeit den Tugendhaften eines jeden Glau-
bens verhieß,[92] durch die unmittelbare Lektüre von Maimonides
geprägt gewesen sei,[93] und auch Reimarus war von diesem nicht unbe-
einflusst. Der Möglichkeiten für Anregungen gibt es freilich bei einem
gelehrten Bücherfresser viele,[94] und wenn Lessing seinen Gedanken
ernst nahm, dass jeder Mensch zuerst als Jude, dann als Christ, und
schließlich als Deist wiedergeboren würde,[95] dann hatte ja auch er selbst
in seinen persönlichen Lebensschicksalen gelebten Anteil an diesen
Systemen.

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[88] Jürgen Kreft, Lessing und die Toleranz, in Freimark, Lessing und die Toleranz,
209–221, 218.

[89] Silvia Horsch, Rationalität und Toleranz. Lessings Auseinandersetzung mit dem
Islam, Würzburg 2004.

[90] Für die Lessing wohl näherstehende christliche Tradition vgl. den Artikel ‚Aban-
don', in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité I, 1939, 2–49.

[91] Karl-J. Kuschel, Vom Streit zum Wettstreit der Religionen. Lessing und die Her-
ausforderung des Islam, Düsseldorf 1998.

[92] A. Schmitt, „Die Wahrheit rühret unter mehr als einer Gestalt", in E. Engel, Hg.,
Neues zur Lessing-Forschung, Tübingen 1998, 69–104, 100.

[93] Niewöhner, Veritas sive Varietas, 399 ff.

[94] Ein die Religion symbolisierender „lapis pretiosus" kommt z.B. in der Legende von
Barlam vor: Penna, La parabola di tre anelli, 32 ff., 155.

[95] Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts § 94 ff., Werke, ed. Riemann VI, 219.

„Vielleicht wurden wir für die Wahrheit erschaffen, da wir es für die Tugend nicht sind. Für die Wahrheit? Wie vielfach ist sie? Jeder glaubt sie zu haben, und jeder hat sie anders. Nein, nur der Irrtum ist unser Teil, und Wahn ist unsere Wissenschaft." So Lessing in den Vorerinnerung zu seinem leider unvollständigen Werk Die Religion.[96] Angesichts dieser Erkenntnis mag zum Abschluß unserer Beschäftigung mit den Ringparabeln und Verwandtem nur wiederholt werden, was ihr Autor für die Lektüre des ganzen Nathan formuliert hat: „Genug, . . . wenn unter tausend Lesern nur einer daraus an der Evidenz und Allgemeinheit seiner Religion zweifeln lernt."[97]

Anhang: Ringparabel für das dritte Jahrtausend

Im Lessingjahr 2004

Es hatte eine Mutter drei Töchter, derer jeder sie einen kostbaren Ring von wunderbarer Gestalt zum Geschenke machte, auf deren spiegelnden Oberflächen die zierlichsten Fabeleien eingegraben waren. Da konnte man auf dem einen Schriftrolle und Leuchter erblicken, Kreuz und Lamm auf dem anderen, Bildzeichen und Mondsichel auf dem dritten. Die Töchter, den Kinderschuhen zwar schon entwachsen, doch weit noch weg vom vollen Gebrauche ihrer Vernunft, mochten sich nicht damit bescheiden, in den Kleinodien die edelsten Stoffe dieser Welt und die phantastischsten Erfindungen menschlichen Witzes zu bewundern, wähnten vielmehr, die eine, ihr Ring sei aus dem Funkeln der Sternen geschaffen, die zweite, der ihre habe vom Silber des Mondes seinen Gehalt, die dritte gar, die Strahlen der Sonne wären in dem ihren nur gebannt.

Da nun die Mutter nicht im Hause war, um ihrer segensreichen Tätigkeit, der Lehre an den Hohen Schulen, nachzugehen, wies jedes der drei Mädchen den anderen ihr Geschmeide und begehrte, als des

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[96] Werke, ed. Riemann I, 166 f.

[97] An Karl, 18. 4. 1779, in Werke, ed. Barner XII, 247. — Die angekündigte Publikation von Markus Pohlmeyer, Lessing, ‚Nathan' und die Toleranz: philosophisch-theologische Utopie in literarischer Gestalt, Münster 2007, war bei Abschluß dieses Beitrags noch nicht erschienen.

vortrefflichsten Besitzerin geehrt zu werden. Darob entzweiten sich die Töchter so sehr, dass die eine ein Feuer entfachte, ihre Schwestern darin zu verbrennen, die zweite ihren Geschwistern mit dem Messer auflauerte und die dritte ihre Speisen mit Gift versetzte. Schon war Blut geflossen, Haut verbrannt und Erbrechen erregt, da die Mutter heimgekehrt. Ihr Törinnen, schalt sie die Mädchen, betrügt euch selbst! Was gibt euch denn den Grund, im Überirdischen zu suchen, was Menschengeist und -kunst, von dieser Welt, in dieser Welt, für diese Welt gemacht? Ihr gebt die Ringe mir zurück; sie sollen ausgesetzt für alle zu verständiger Betrachtung sein, doch tragen soll sie niemand. Eine jede bitte die anderen um Vergebung, und Friede herrsche zwischen euch im Wissen, dass dem Streit die Ursach' fehlt!

Die Mutter starb, die Töchter sind an Jahren nun herangewachsen, ob gleicherweise an Vernunft, bleibt ungewiss. Die Ringe glänzen noch an ihren Fingern. Gift, Feuer, Messer liegen nach wie vor bereit. Die Ringe haben noch Gewalt, Gewalt gebären sie, als ob sie Fesseln wären und nicht Schmuck. Zögernd, zu zögernd, gehen sie aus, die Töchter, aus Unmündigkeit, aus Eigenstolz, aus Schuld. Vielleicht auch hemmen sie den Schritt und wenden sich zurück, weil sie ein Leben ohne Sonne, Mond und Sterne, und ohne Blut und Brand und Mord zu führen nicht vermögen.

BRILL

Syncretism Revisited:
Hindus and Muslims over a Saintly Cult in Bengal

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Abstract

This paper reconsiders the concept of "syncretism," and identifies its range and implications when applied to the analysis of the saintly cult of the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. The mausoleum of Manamohan Datta (1877–1909) is situated in what is currently eastern Bangladesh. Both Hindus and Muslims in the area join together in the various rituals held at the mausoleum. The article discusses the social and cultural factors that explain the sharing of rituals and beliefs by these people. In particular, word correspondences in the religious vocabulary facilitates the mutual acceptance of different cultural forms and norms. The article also examines the critical discourses on syncretistic situations related to the mausoleum in the context of contemporary Bangladesh. Finally, the article discusses the usefulness of the concept of syncretism in elucidating the social and cultural conditions which make possible religious pluralism and multiple discourses.

The article opens with a literature review and a statement of the problems. This is followed by a brief history of Saint Manomohan and a description of the ritual practices at the mausoleum. The pluralistic structure of these practices is then examined, and the conditions for acceptance of pluralistic practices are discussed with reference to the critical discourses conducted by the local population. The findings are summed up in a conclusion.

Keywords
syncretism, Hindu-Muslim relations, Manomohan, Bengal

1. Religious Syncretism

This paper analyses a saintly cult of the religious poet Manomohan Datta (1877–1909), who was born in the present-day village of Satmora in the Brahmanbaria district of Bangladesh. Manomohan was

born to a family of Hindus, but the Muslims of nearby villages hold the traditional belief that he became well-versed in the Qur'an and the Hadith, and then followed Islam. The mausoleum built for Manomohan is quite similar to the shrines of Muslim saints, and is a place of worship to this day. The anniversary of Manomohan's birth, in particular, is marked by large-scale festivals with many stalls, and such events still attract many people. Normally, Hindus are cremated after death and their ashes are scattered into the Ganges River. Moreover, although Vaishnavas do build mausoleums (*samadhi*), they are rarely objects of worship. The Manomohan mausoleum thus stands out as an exception. It continues to influence the beliefs of the local population, Muslims and Hindus alike. Both religious groups visit the mausoleum to pray in order to avoid adversity, such as diseases, and to celebrate Manomohan's birth on a grand scale. These celebrations are similar to the annual festivals held for Sufi saints at other Islamic mausoleums (*majar*) in rural Bengal.

In the folk society of South Asia, the sharing of beliefs and rituals, or religious syncretism, by Hindus and Muslims has not been uncommon. For example, Kabir (1440–1518?), who was raised as a Muslim in a family of weavers, is known for having advocated the universality of religions, stating that the difference between religions is only the difference in God's name.[1] His religious insights had a profound influence on religious movements in medieval India, such as Guru Nanak's Sikhism and the Bhakti movement. In Bengal, the 19th century religious poet Fakir Lalon Shah (d. 1890) is the best known example. He was born to a Hindu family, but became a Baul singer following the tradition of the Bengali minstrels, and renounced the world in pursuit of the universality of religions.[2] The many songs written by Lalon are still popular, both in Bangladesh and West Bengal, India.

Such contact and fusion among different religious cultures is often called syncretism in the study of religion and anthropology.[3] Michael

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[1] Hedayetullah 1977 discusses details of the relationship between the Bhakti movements led by Kabir and Sufism.

[2] The present author has discussed Lalon Shah's religious thought in some articles in Japanese, and a part of them appeared in a Bengali newspaper: "Lalaner Ciraparicita Majarke Phire Cai." *Pratham Alo*, 30 November 2000, Dhaka.

[3] "Syncretism" is used as the generic term for religious syncretism in the fields of the study of religion, anthropology, history, etc. The etymology of this term is considered

Pye (1971), who investigated the various definitions of syncretism, defined it as follows:

> The temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern.[4]

When employed as a macro-level explanatory concept, it is possible to find various expressions of syncretism in Manomohan's mausoleum, where both Hindus and Muslims share common rituals and ideas. However, it is difficult for religious scholars and anthropologists to provide a definition for syncretism that can be widely understood, without being at the same time open to criticism for vagueness regarding the nature and background of the syncretistic phenomenon (e.g. Leopold and Jensen 2004:2–12). In reality, religion as it is actually practiced is an outcome of syncretism, because it borrows various elements from a broad range of conventional cultures (Van der Leeuw 1933:688–98). Thus, the common understanding of "syncretism" has given rise to a tendency to first imagine orthodox and essential forms of religions, and then explain actual religious phenomena as modified or collapsed versions of these (Martin 1996).

  This essentialist explanation may have serious implications. On the one hand, it may have pejorative connotations, implying that actual religious practices may be unorthodox or deviations from the genuine forms (Peel 1968).[5] On the other hand it describes a certain religious ideology as if it were beyond history, and which is often maintained for political motives. In a recent publication, Asim Roy, who is well known for his pioneering study on the syncretistic tradition of Bengal, discusses this issue in the context of modern South Asian history, and the

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to be the Greek word *syngkrasis* (mixed together), which first appeared in Plutarch (Colpe 1987). In addition, the term is often used in discussions of cultural hybridity and the creolization of languages, in sociology and linguistics.

[4] Pye's definition was intended to emphasize religious dynamism, especially in a discussion of Kamstra 1970. However, this definition was criticized in turn by Martin (1996) as presupposing a form of religious essentialism. The following is a recent definition by an anthropologist: "the unsystematic (or unsystematized) combination within a single tradition of elements which their originators intended to be kept apart" (Gellner 1997).

[5] In particular, European missionaries' views regarding converts to Christianity in the Yoruba society in Africa became a sensitive issue.

discourses of Indian secularism and religious pluralism that arose in the postcolonial setting.[6] Thus, in both the modern and pre-modern era, a difference in orientation can be observed, within the same culture, between those who do not recognize the reality of religious fusion and those attempting awareness of it.[7]

The beliefs and activities connected with the Manomohan's mausoleum provide a good example of the variety of phenomena that can be described as syncretistic, and also provide evidence that syncretism can be used fruitfully as an explanatory term.[8] Above all, the fact that Hindus and Muslims can mutually share ritual practices is an effective rebuttal of the colonial representation of South Asian society as existing in unceasing religious conflict. However, a problematic point is that the emphasis on the possibility of religious harmony means that the phenomenon may become vague.

For instance, as Peter van der Veer (1994) has pointed out, the Hindu nationalists' doctrine states that India has a tradition of syncretism inclusive of various religions, but this is ultimately transformed into the communalist and intolerant political remark that, "Hinduism is a way of life in India."[9] A similar situation can be seen in Bangladesh, where the radical Islamic parties, which participated in the uprisings in the Liberation war, argued that Islam constituted a uniting feature of the national identity.[10] It is necessary, therefore, to verify the appropriate-

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[6] See Roy 1983, and Hasan and Roy 2005:1–25.

[7] The representation of the pre-modern as the opposite of the modern should be reconsidered. For instance, Sen (1943) pointed out that among both Hindus and Muslims, there existed people intolerant of other religions. In considering either Hindus or Muslims, there was no evidence supporting the idea that any proactive practice of anti-syncretism (Stewart and Shaw 1994:1–26) was not conducted in the pre-modern era.

[8] To regard syncretism as an explanatory system was suggested by Leopold and Jensen 2004:2–12. In addition, Gellner 1997 studied the usage of the term syncretism in South Asia, and pointed out problematic aspects of its theoretical and analytical use, concluding that syncretism should be used only as a descriptive concept for describing actual culture.

[9] The Hindu nationalists, who were responsible for the Ayodhiya incident in 1992, claimed that Hinduism is a way of life in India, and could subsume Muslims during its Hindu Nationalist campaign (Jaffrelot 1996:4–29).

[10] It is well known that the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangaladesh appealed to the minority Hindu that they too could become members of the party. The current situation of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh is discussed in Togawa 2004.

ness of the concept of syncretism through an inquiry into the historical and social contexts where Hindus and Muslims coexist, and which may be referred to as syncretistic traditions (Droogers 1989; Stewart and Shaw 1994:7). The complexity of this issue is evident in Stewart's (1995) statement that discourse on the virtue of religious tolerance among the people in South Asia constitutes part of a "politics of religious synthesis" as well as a critique of the synthesis of religions.

In this paper, the conditions for pluralistic religious practices are examined in the case of Manomohan's mausoleum are. Following a brief history of Saint Manomohan, the ritual practices at the saint's mausoleum are investigated, and the pluralistic structure as practiced by Hindus and Muslims is discussed. Finally, the conditions for the acceptance of pluralistic practices are discussed through the critical discourses of the local population about the saint's mausoleum.

2. Saint Manomohan

Manomohan Datta was born in 1877, in Satmora village in the Comilla District of the Bengal presidency in British India. The Datta family were small land owners or Zamindars in the area, and belonged to the Baidya caste, which specialized in medicine (Biswas 1992; Datta 1977). As a young child, Manomohan's religious awareness developed in his play activities; for example, he imitated Hindu rituals (*puja*) using flowers and fruits as offerings. He was more inclined towards religion than academic education, and visited the ascetics at nearby ashrams from early childhood.

Manomohan was inspired by Saint Maharaj Anand Swami (1832–1900), a famous proponent of the Brahma Samaj (a reformist sect in modern Hinduism) in the Comilla region, who preached the essential oneness of all religions. During his stay at Anand Swami's ashram in 1896, Manomohan had several spiritual experiences. In particular, it is known that when Manomohan was carrying out ascetic practices under the guidance of Anand Swami, the Swamiji told him that the Prophet Muhammad would appear to him in a dream. The same night, the Prophet appeared to him, dressed in a white gown (Biswas 1992:18). From then onwards, Manomohan had various religious experiences such as repeated appearances of the Hindu goddess Kali in his dreams.

In addition, he was often filled with lightning radiation while in a deep meditative state. He deepened his religious insight through such spiritual experiences, and spent his time perusing the sacred books of different religions and singing religious songs. In addition, he summarized the religious ideas that pre-occupied him in poems and literary works.

In 1901, Manomohan married Saudamoni (1888–1963), a girl from a neighbouring village, and in 1908, their son, Sudhir Chandra, was born. After the marriage Manomohan tried to work, but eventually decided to devote himself to spiritual pursuits. After naming his house in Satmora village Anand Ashram after his mentor, he devoted himself to meditation at the base of a sacred *bel* (stone-apple) tree. During his short lifetime of 31 years, Manomohan wrote a large number of religious poems, expressing his religious fervour, and these have been collected in 14 books.[11] Beautiful melodies were added to these poems, and they remain popular folk songs in the region. The religious insight woven into his poems expresses a universal religious perspective.[12]

Among his works, there are many of poems based on Islamic ideas and written in Arabic. It is said that a teacher of the nearby Madrasa was very impressed with his works, and said that, although he had studied the Qur'an, he could not understand the complicated terms used by Manomohan.[13] As word about Manomohan spread in the area, pilgrims from different religions and sects flocked to his ashram.

Aftab Uddin Khan (?–1933) has been acknowledged as Manomohan's favourite Muslim disciple. Aftab became Manomohan's disciple

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[11] Manomohan actually left as many as 34 handwritten manuscripts containing poems and religious thoughts. Part of them was eaten by insects, and 14 books have been published to date. This subject will be discussed later.

[12] The following passages open one of his most popular poems, the "Song For All Religions": "Eliminate religious conflicts, and achieve this world's happiness. / All people conform their minds, and sing under the name of *dayamay* (merciful). / With the name of Shiva, Kali, Krishna, or the name of Allah, Radha / The spirit of mercy is a venerable duty, the release from this world's diseases. / Even when I am satisfied with any other names, I am delighted to hear the name of *dayamay*. / Let's unite our hearts and actualize our wishes. Such conduct is accompanied by peace. / No matter how many forms and names exist, divinity is only one. / By knowing the lessons of this karma, we will be able to complete our duties in this world." (*Malay*, Vol. 2)

[13] This is a story villagers often narrate. The author obtained the same comments from a teacher of the Madrasa in the village.

in 1904, and was his constant companion, always living under the same roof. Aftab was the elder brother of Ustad Allauddin Khan, the world renowned sarod player, and it was he who set Manomohan's lyrics to music.[14] In 1921, Aftab performed Manomohan's songs at the residence of Rabindranath Tagore, in Calcutta. Tagore, a poetic genius, was impressed with the performance, and remarked: "Poets only fancy, while saints witness reality."

In this way, Manomohan attracted many disciples from different religions, who underwent initiation (*diksha/bayat*) with him. According to a surviving list of early disciples both religions were represented; out of 35 disciples, 29 were Hindu and 6 were Muslim. In addition, there were 8 Hindu and 2 Muslim ascetics.

In the Ashwin month of 1909, Manomohan sensed that his death was approaching, and informed his disciples. Several days prior to his death, he requested his devotees to gather around him. In front of his disciples and devotees, Manomohan asked that his body not be cremated but be buried, by the roots of the *bel* tree. When Manomohan passed away on the 20th day of the Ashwin month, his body was buried by the tree, in accordance with his final wishes, with his head to the west, toward Mecca. This custom of burying a body in the reclining position is Islamic. In contrast, Hindus generally cremate their dead, or in the case of Vaishnavas, they are buried in the posture of meditation. Manomohan's decision to be buried in the reclining position with his head to the west was a factor which later encouraged local Muslims to recognize his mausoleum as belonging to a Muslim saint.

3. Rituals at the Saint's Mausoleum

The rituals that take place at the mausoleum can be roughly classified into the following four categories: occasional rituals, daily rituals, weekly rituals and annual rituals.[15]

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[14] Allauddin Khan (1862–1972) is well known as the father of modern Indian music (Hindustani sangeeta).

[15] The field data described below is mainly based on the field survey in January 1998, though the author has visited the mausoleum several times since then.

(1) Occasional Rituals

During occasional rituals, local devotees dedicate offerings and pray at the mausoleum for their wishes to come true. On the anniversary of the saint's birth in the Magh month, particularly large numbers of devotees come to dedicate offerings (*prasada*). The kinds of offerings are not specified, although Hindus tend to dedicate confectionery and fruits in the Hindu ritual context, while Muslims tend to dedicate rose water and milk, known as *sinni/tabarrak.* Candles and incense are also commonly used, as well as goats. Since animal sacrifice is not allowed, the animals are simply dedicated at the mausoleum's altar.

(2) Daily Rituals

A committee consisting of the descendents of Manomohan and devotees manages the daily rituals at the mausoleum. These rituals take place at dawn (*bhor arati*), in the morning (*nitya seba*), at noon (*bhog arati*), and at dusk (*sandhya arati*). The procedures resemble common Hindu rituals practiced by Brahman priests, but Manomohan's songs are sung in place of the Sanskrit prayers and chants. At present, the priest in charge of daily rituals is a young man from the village who belongs to the Namasudra caste, the so-called outcastes. After sunset, a votive candle and other offerings are dedicated on the altar (*sandhya arati*), and the final offering is rose water, which is commonly used at Islamic mausoleums. Thus, the ceremony at the mausoleum is based on the rituals of the Brahman priests, but incorporates some Islamic elements.

(3) Weekly Rituals

With regard to weekly rituals, the Sunday prayer is important. Every Sunday, vegetarian dishes are offered, with a steady stream of devotees visiting the mausoleum from early morning. The doors and windows of the mausoleum are opened, and devotees gather in its corridors. Then, the master (a descendent of Manomohan) appears and Manomohan's songs are sung, accompanied by accordions (*harmonium*), drums and bells. After that, the devotees form a procession around the precinct of the mausoleum, following the master. This singing procession visits a series of places around the perimeter of the mausoleum. Some devotees become elated and sing the songs enthusiastically with their hands uplifted. This kind of singing pro-

cession resembles the *kirtan*, which is a popular style for praising the god Krishna among the Vaishnava Hindus.

(4) Annual Rituals

An important event in the annual ritual is the anniversary of Manomohan's birth in mid-January (the 10th day of the Magh month). On that day, many people, including residents of neighbouring villages, come together to celebrate in grand style. The mausoleum committee supplies about 1,600 kilos of rice and vegetables for votive meals for the devotees; this is enough for about 8,000 people. The rituals performed by the committee at the altar are basically Hindu-based, with few exceptions; for example. there is no worship of idols. The behaviour of many of the people who attend the festival is not always in accordance with the rituals hosted by the committee. Their objective is generally to pay their respects at the altar of the mausoleum, and to dedicate offerings while praying for their own wishes. In fact, only some make invocations as devotees of Manomohan; others are just there for the boisterous festival. In other words, the annual festival has been designed as a ceremonial event that attracts a broad range of the people.

To illustrate, many stalls are set up on the vacant land surrounding the mausoleum, and a fair is held on the site. A wide variety of commodities are displayed, such as agricultural equipment, clothing accessories, snacks, food and beverages. Makeshift eateries are constructed, puppet show troupes set up awnings, and places for the game of crown and anchor are also prepared. On the night of the festival, the mausoleum is the site of cultural programs, which may include a speech by a politician from Dhaka and a performance of Manomohan's songs by a famous singer. Those attending sing Manomohan's songs all through the night. The festivals, rituals and mausoleum fascinate the people, in a way that is similar to the phenomenon commonly witnessed at annual festivals (*urs*) at the mausoleums of Muslim saints and at the annual fairs (*mela*) at Hindu temples.[16]

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[16] The term *urs* generally means the anniversary of a saint's death commemorated at Islamic mausoleums, but in Bengali the word may also be used for the birth anniversary of saints or any other annual ritual occasion.

4. Cultural Pluralism

The place surrounding Manomohan's mausoleum is officially called Anand Ashram. While Muslim villagers usually call this mausoleum a *majar* (the Muslim saintly mausoleum), a word borrowed from Arabic, Hindus call it *samadhi* (Hindu mausoleum), a word borrowed from Sanskrit. When asked, the mixed Hindu-Muslim population of the village maintain that they accept the use of both *majar* and *samadhi* for Manomohan's mausoleum. Moreover, this linguistic pluralism is not limited to the name of the mausoleum, but can also be seen in the names of various ritual items and titles. This is illustrated by the following table:

Table 1. Word correspondences at the Mausoleum of Manomohan

	Hindus (from Sanskrit)	Muslims (from Persian or Arabic)
Mausoleum	*samadhi*	*majar*
Birth anniversary	*janma-utsab*	*urs*
Offerings	*prasad*	*sinni/ tabarrak*
Devotees	*bhakta*	*ashek*
Initiation	*disksha*	*bayat*
Master	*guru*	*pir*
Disciple	*sishya*	*murid*
Chanting	*jap*	*jikr*

In Bengali, such word correspondence is a common phenomenon; for example, the word meaning water differs between Muslims (*pani*) and Hindus (*jal*), as do the words for mother and father: *abba-amma* among Muslims and *baba-ma* among Hindus. At Manomohan's mausoleum the words representing the religious world are structured in a similar pluralistic manner of correspondences. This means that the plural meanings are shared, with each community mutually recognizing that the other's terms are used and accepting such usage without opposition. The religious vocabulary is not mutually exclusive, with the consequence that multiple religious practices can take place at the same mausoleum.

   This situation reflects, on the one hand, the insight that every religion has a universal aspect, as was emphasized repeatedly by Manomo-

han himself in his songs. In one famous lyric he claims: "Even when there are hundreds of figures and names, divinity is only one." On the other hand, this implies that the mutual acceptance of different cultural forms and norms among the devotees at the mausoleum is a condition for actualising a pluralistic religious practice. While mutually accepting the differences of one another's religions, devotees need to possess a shared recognition of the possibility that the same goal, as the one Manomohan embodied, can ultimately be attained by pursuing different paths.

The coexistence of religions based on vocabulary usage is the most understandable case for explaining syncretistic situations. It is clear that those who live in multilingual environments shift language mode according to context and situation. As Martin (1996) pointed out, the existence of such human cognitive structures indicates that religion, analogously to language, is selected by people as a cognitive system and put to various uses depending on the context and situation. Furthermore, such conditions of cultural fusion may lead to a multilingual, multicultural society, as in creolization, where cultural mixing is recognized as the constant form for the society.

5. Cultural Assimilation

With regard to the vocabulary used in multicultural contexts, some locals insist on more rigorous usage, particularly intellectual Muslims. This group, including the region's Madrasa teachers, based their views on their expertise in Islam, and their perception of the mausoleum differed from the general public's views. For instance, a Madrasa teacher in the village acknowledged that Manomohan was an excellent ascetic who was versed in a variety of religions including Islam, and explained that what he attained was ultimately identical to the precepts of the Qur'an:

> Manomohan became acquainted with various religions and underwent asceticism, eventually realizing the same truth as the teachings of the Qur'an and then summarizing them in his songs. Just as the Prophet Muhammad recorded the revelations of Allah in the Qur'an inside the Hira cave, Manomohan acquired the ultimate truth through meditation deep in the jungle. Like the great Sufi saints of

> Islam this kind of exceptional master is a chosen one, and therefore Manomohan
> is a local source of pride for us.

This Muslim teacher's explanation expresses the feelings of many villagers, including Muslims who revere and are proud of the saint, and do not perceive any conflict with the doctrine of Islam based on the precepts of the Qur'an. This explanation illustrates the compatibility of two realities; first, that most of the villagers are Muslims, which means that they recognize the Qur'an as an exclusive scripture and profess Allah as the only and absolute God, and second, that Manomohan is a popular poet and has been considered a saint by the villagers since their grandparents' generation, his mausoleum now being a famous site that attracts even urban people, without it being necessary to make a strict examination of which aspects of his teachings are consistent with the precepts of the Qur'an. To explain this view, the Muslim elder who is considered the oldest sage in the village, stated the following:

> Manomohan acquired a truth that was very close to the teachings of the Prophet
> Muhammad. With his disciple Aftab, he practiced chanting in the name of Allah
> (*jikr*), like the great saints of Islam. Actually, at the mausoleum, Manomohan
> secretly kept the Qur'an with him and was always reading it. Manomohan had
> already moved away from Hindu society and had begun Sufi practices. I suppose
> it may be said that he did not differ from us Muslims because he believed in Allah.
> This is why Manomohan left many poems that express the ethos of Islam.

While Manomohan is venerated as a saint who has won the devotion of people in the region he is also viewed as embodying a faith consistent with the fundamental ideas of Islam. If the religious world view that Manomohan embodied were perceived as unrelated to Islam, it would inevitably be regarded as pagan (*kafir*), no matter how excellent its religious principles might be. However, the unique world view cultivated by Manomohan is still supported by many people, including Muslims and has become a source of local pride. The poems he left include arcane references to the religious tradition of Islam, making use of Arabic terms, and even Islamic intellectuals from the region who have mastered the language cannot decipher them readily.

As it became difficult to deny the proposition that Manomohan was a distinguished saint, Islamic intellectuals, who were well aware of their

own religion, came to accept that Manomohan was actually a Muslim in the sense of believing in Allah, and thus not different from themselves.

6. Politics in Syncretism

Manomohan never actually stated that he was a Muslim. Rather, he maintained that each religion is simply a means for reaching an ultimate truth. Accordingly, the attitude of emphasizing religious difference later gave rise to conflicts among those who followed the concept of universal religion embodied by Manomohan. In this regard, the above-mentioned village elder said the following:

> The people in charge of the mausoleum after Manomohan's death attempted to draw the mausoleum close to Hinduism. At present, all the rituals held at the mausoleum have become Hindu, with many people chanting together in the way of the Vaishnava ritual (*kirtan*), and with women crying out in the manner used in praising the Hindu deities (*uluddhani*). The poems of Manomohan that contain the precepts of Islam have not yet been published. When I asked about them, they said that the handwritten manuscripts were eaten by bugs and lost. However, I suppose that the people at the mausoleum are still hiding many manuscripts of Islamic poems. They made Manomohan's mausoleum into an *ashram* (Hindu monastery) for Hindus. However, I still think that it should have been made into a *darga* (Sufi mausoleum) of Islam.

This village elder is one of the last of the generation who was alive when Saudamani, the wife of Manomohan, managed the mausoleum. Since there are no others who can verify this now, the elder's tale of Manomohan as an excellent Muslim ascetic is becoming a legend. In this legend, the perception of a distinguished saint representing the ethos of Islam results in a heightened awareness of religious difference and a criticism of the non-Islamic elements associated with the mausoleum.

In his poems, Manomohan quoted words from the Qur'an and always venerated Allah, but he never rejected the pious devotion to the Hindu gods and goddesses. What is particularly interesting is the fact that Manomohan's universal attitude towards religion could lead to the view that he had also acquired the truth of Islam like other Muslims. A scrutiny of Manomohan on the basis of the essential differences between the religions inevitably leads to an either-or identification: a Hindu "like them," or

a Muslim "like us." It is important to recognize here that equating the statement that, "Manomohan was deeply aware of Islam" with religious universality may result in the religiously exclusive conclusion that, "If Manomohan was an excellent Muslim like us, why are other religions necessary?" This point will be examined at the end of this paper.

The language in which villagers speak of the mausoleum illustrates the fact that the practice of religious tolerance of some cultural difference in cultures often results in an indifference toward other differences. As discussed earlier, at the mausoleum different cultures coexist pluralistically in that participants follow completely different religious norms and ritual systems side by side. However, the fact that people are sharing the same ritual sphere does not necessarily mean that they all share the same religious ethos embodied by the saint. Tolerant attitudes toward different religions do not exclude indifferent attitudes toward others from the viewpoint of non-interference.

Consequently, as the mausoleum attracts the attention of Muslim intellectuals and the Islamization of Bangladesh society progresses, the mausoleum is gradually becoming more isolated and reclusive as a separate religious community. Muslim villagers are becoming increasingly conscious of the differences between those who profess the ideas of Manomohan and those who do not. In addition, in some sectarian groups at the mausoleum the conviction that, "only our sect is practicing true religious universality," is growing. Such changes are creating problems among those currently involved with the mausoleum and who have had no direct relationship with Manomohan.

The well-known Indian scholar Ashis Nandy (1990) has warned that the emergence of religion as ideology in the postcolonial context of India would lead to the loss of the religious tolerance in rural areas. The case of Manomohan's mausoleum, however, indicates how a syncretistic situation characterized by lack of mutual understanding can result in the acceptance of indifference toward others in local communities. To put it another way, this example illustrates the fact that religious tolerance and pluralist coexistence are not always contradictory to communal consciousness in the people, which has caused religious conflicts repeatedly in the history of South Asia.[17]

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[17] In this light, the preaching of religious tolerance by asserting that every religion can reach the same truth may induce indifferent or non-interventional attitudes towards

The following two antithetical events are symbolic of these conditions. The first concerns an experience of a grandson of Manomohan at the current mausoleum. One day, a Muslim elder of the village visited the mausoleum and asked, "If Manomohan embodied the precepts of Islam and treated even Muslims equally, why don't you construct a mosque in the precinct of the mausoleum?" The grandson's answer to this question was, "The Qur'an instructs us that prayer does not depend on location. At the time of prayer, Muslim devotees say their prayers at any place of the precinct, and nobody interferes with them."

The other event is a story about a local Madrasa, which had a long history, dating back to the British period.[18] This Madrasa once warned the Muslim villagers that, "Those who visit Manomohan's mausoleum will become non-Muslims." In this case, it is obvious that Manomohan was the target of criticism, being considered an adversary to Islam responsible for confusing good Muslims.

There is duality here, in that the village elder acknowledges that Manomohan was an excellent Muslim, and suggests that he should be treated as a Muslim, while the institutionalised Madrasa regards him as a dubious figure essentially incompatible with Islam. Hence the warning, that Muslims should not go to mausoleum. Despite such antithetical attitudes toward Manomohan, both share a similar viewpoint regarding the essential distinctions between religions, which is exemplified in the modern concept of the classification of religions. In other words, the opinions of both parties can easily become consistent with each other, with regard to criticisms of the vague attitudes held by the disciples of Manomohan on matters of religious distinctions.

The statements from locals included in this paper clearly suggest that the structure of the pluralistic religion around the mausoleum is not

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other religions. Conversely, religious essentialism that accepts the differences between individual religions and emphasizes the uniqueness of each religion does not necessarily conflict with views accepting the coexistence of religious communities. Stewart and Shaw described such a situation, stating that, "essentialist theories of culture . . . necessarily encounter 'syncretism'" (1994:22).

[18] A critical view of the mausoleums generally is held by the Madrasas under the influence of the Deobandi school in South Asia. It is well known that the Deobandi school waged a campaign against the saint worship at mausoleums since the late 19th century.

incompatible with the communal consciousness of modern religions. This is primarily because the structure enables devotees to listen to the preaching of Manomohan's poems and interpret them in different ways that support the practice of distinct religions. This indicates a dilemma as to whether an attitude that respects the coexistence of pluralistic religious practices, can accept a religion that denies religious pluralism.

Simply describing the interaction between different religions as syncretism or as religious pluralism obscures the underlying latent contradictions and conflicts. Conversely, an examination of the discourses held by the people over syncretistic situations in social and historical contexts is an effective way to reveal the latent causes of religious contradictions or antagonism among the people.

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Parades and Processions: Protestant and Catholic Ritual Performances in a Nuevo New South Town

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s, the American South has changed drastically and Siler City, North Carolina reflects those changes. Like larger southern cities, Siler City has received a significant number of migrants from Latin America in a short amount of time. New migrants, many but not all of them Roman Catholic, bring diverse sets of ethnic, cultural, and religious practices to a town traditionally dominated by Baptists and Methodists. One of the most visible examples of local religious disruption in Siler City has been the public display of Good Friday processions by Latino Catholics. That performance signified the presence of new migrants in downtown space. White Protestants, in turn, drew on the long standing ritual tradition of downtown Fourth of July parades to reassert their presence in that same space. Annually performed since 1901, the parades revealed a moral order based on the logic of southern Christian sacrifice. And the vitality of downtown parades indicated the political strength of white Protestants to maintain established order. That strength diminished with the local economic decline of downtown businesses in the 1980s and was challenged by the arrival of Latino migrants in the 1990s. The parades ended in 1988 but were renewed in 1997, the year following the first Good Friday procession in city streets. In the revitalized parade, white Protestants expressed nostalgia for a southern way of life and publicly remembered a time and place — downtown Siler City — before economic decline and Latino arrival.

In April 2006, Latino parishioners at St. Julia Roman Catholic Church in Siler City, North Carolina, performed their annual public Good Friday procession, reenacting the way of the cross and the crucifixion of

Christ. The procession route circled the new St. Julia church, a building specifically constructed for Latino members. Completed in 2001, the church design, which has won at least one architectural award, combines a rural Mexican style with the geometric lines of a mill warehouse, making it stand out against the grain silos, grazing cattle, and open spaces of the North Carolina countryside.[1] As described by Pastor Joseph Madden, the front of the church features a "plaza where people sit in the sun," which he noted as one design component of a facility that was "welcoming to [the city's] Spanish population" (Padgett 2005). That year, the final Stations of the Cross, from crucifixion to burial, were performed there, in front of the church. Located a short drive east of downtown Siler City, the new St. Julia church is visible to passers-by on Highway 64, the four lane thoroughfare that runs from Raleigh through Siler City and southwest toward Charlotte. For passing motorist, it was difficult to miss three Latino men hanging from crosses in the plaza of the sun. That day, some drivers even honked their car horns as they zoomed along. Whether or not this gesture was in support or protest, though, I am not sure. But one thing was certain: the religious and cultural landscape of Siler City had changed significantly since the early 1990s.[2]

Like other new Latino destinations, Siler City — positioned in central North Carolina — has received a large number of migrants from Latin America in a short amount of time, some arriving directly, others relocating from elsewhere in the United States, particularly California and New York. In 1990, the Siler City population numbered close to 5,000 people, roughly 70% white and 30% black. But these demographics changed rapidly in the next few years. By 2000, Spanish-speakers comprised at least 40 percent (2,740 persons) of the town's residents.[3] Recruited by textile and poultry plants, new migrants, many but not all

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[1] Fieldnotes, 14 April 2006. The church design has been recognized with at least one architectural award: Centurion Construction Company 2006.

[2] For a discussion of emerging religious diversity in the South, see Tweed 2002.

[3] As of 1990, the Siler City population of 4,955 was 68% White, 27% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% other (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). But the demographics have changed drastically. Recruited primarily from Mexico by textile and poultry plants in Siler City, a large number of Hispanics have made their way to the town. From 1990 until 2000, the Hispanic population increased from 3% (147 persons) to nearly 40% (2,740 persons) of the town's total population, and that is just counting documented residents/migrants (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

of them Roman Catholic, brought diverse sets of ethnic, cultural, and religious practices to a town traditionally dominated by Baptists and Methodists.[4] The arrival of a large number of Catholics to this southern town disrupted an evangelical Protestant cultural and demographic stronghold. One of the most visible examples of local religious disruption in Siler City has been the public performance of Good Friday processions by Latino Catholics.

In this article, I briefly trace the history of Fourth of July parades and Good Friday processions in Siler City, North Carolina. Since 1901, white Protestants annually performed a southern way of life in the streets of Siler City. The downtown Fourth of July parades revealed a moral order based on the logic of southern Christian sacrifice. And the vitality of downtown parades indicated the political strength of white Protestants to maintain that established order. That strength diminished with the local economic decline of downtown businesses in the 1980s and was challenged by the arrival of Latino migrants in the 1990s. The Latino Catholic performance of Good Friday processions was one such challenge. Before the processions were moved to the newly constructed St. Julia Catholic Church, they took place downtown. Latino Catholics performed their first Good Friday procession in the city streets in 1996 and the following year a group of white Protestants renewed the downtown Fourth of July parade, which had ended in 1988. That renewed parade was annually performed through 2001, also the last year of the Good Friday procession in downtown streets. When the processions were moved to the new St. Julia Catholic Church in 2002, there was no downtown parade.[5] And as of 2007, there has not been another downtown Fourth of July parade in Siler City.[6] It is difficult to determine if

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[4] Catholics did not have an official parish in Siler City until 1960, and even then they were a small congregation.

[5] The 2002 date for the first Good Friday performance at the new St. Julia Catholic Church was confirmed by a staff member. Members of St. Julia also used Holy Week performances to respond to David Duke's visit to Siler City in February 2000. They participated in a Holy Week March that revisited the City Hall steps, where Duke spoke. According to the event organizer, "People felt like it was very important to reclaim that space and give it a positive image again." Patrick O'Neill, "Jubilee: Siler City Residents Reclaim Their Town from David Duke," *Independent*, 3 May 2000.

[6] These dates are based on accounts from *The Chatham News*. The first mention of a

the renewed parades were an intentional response to those processions; indeed no one ever admitted to me that they were. But the timing of the parades, beginning after the first Good Friday performance downtown and ending after the last procession, suggests more than coincidence. In any case, it is clear that they were an expression of white Protestant nostalgia. In the renewed Fourth of July parade, participants publicly remembered a time and place — downtown Siler City — before economic decline and Latino arrival.

A Southern Way of Life

In the first Fourth of July parade in downtown Siler City, white Protestants fused Lost Cause symbols of the Confederacy with an effervescent American patriotism. In 1901, the county's highest ranking Confederate officer, Colonel John Randolph Lane, dressed in his gray uniform and riding on his horse, led what was described in the local paper as a "procession of mounted ladies and gentlemen, costumed in the national colors," through the streets of Siler City (Hadley 1987). At first glance, the sight of a Confederate officer leading a cavalry clad in red, white, and blue may appear an odd contrast for a southern town. In historical context, though, the juxtaposition of this Lost Cause icon with the living colors of the American flag emerges as a fitting image for this New South town, where many of the ideals of a regional confederacy were joined with national patriotism. At the turn of the century, a few decades removed from Reconstruction, they dusted off their confederate clothing, paraded the American flag with pride, and sang the national anthem with a southern accent, which in this case proved their central North Carolinian descent.[7]

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renewed parade was 1997. Milburn Gibbs, "First Rag Top Parade Big Success," *The Chatham News*, July 10, 1997. The parade is mentioned each year from 1998 to 2001. "Rag Top Parade Saturday in Siler City," *The Chatham News*, July 2, 1998. "Parade, Bull Ride Highlight Fourth of July Activities," *The Chatham News*, July 8, 1999. "July 4 Parade Set for July 1," *The Chatham News*, June 29, 2000. "Fourth of July Comes Early," *The Chatham News*, July 5, 2001. The absence of a parade is noted in 2002. "No July 4th Activities Set," *The Chatham News*, June 27, 2002. And there is no mention of Fourth of July parades in Siler City from 2003–2007.

[7] The 1901 parade also was a renewed Fourth of July celebration. For over two decades after the Civil War, southern whites did not celebrate the Fourth of July, many still

The triumphant return of Colonel John Randolph Lane in the Siler City Fourth of July parade was a Christ-like resurrection for the Confederate soldier. Lane was renowned throughout the surrounding Chatham County for his heroism displayed in the Civil War. Locals told stories about the wounds he endured in battle and his courage to persevere through pain. At Gettysburg, after picking up the regiment flag from a fallen comrade, he was shot through the neck, jaw, and mouth. Though left for dead, Lane survived, having lost part of his tongue but not his spirit. As the events are remembered, he lived to fight another day. Lane rebounded from numerous other battle wounds but was finally forced off the battlefield after a violent injury sustained at Reame's Station on August 25, 1864. According to an account printed in the *Randolph Tribune* in Asheboro, North Carolina, Lane "was wounded in the left breast, by a shell fracturing two, and breaking one rib and tearing open the flesh to the bone just over the heart." Once again, Lane was "thought mortally wounded." But as before at Gettysburg, he defied death by "his superb vitality" and "returned to duty, November 1864." Although he tried to remain with his regiment, he was eventually "broken down by exposure and suffering." When his comrades "surrendered at Appomattox," he was recovering in "a hospital at Greensboro, N.C." (Lane 1903). Similar to the New Testament accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus, this retelling of Lane's battle injury is filled with graphic physical detail of flesh and bone. When Colonel Lane rode into Siler City on Independence Day in 1901, he carried his battles scars, not as one beaten down by war, but as one, like the gospel Christ, who had seen the grave and emerged victorious.

As the procession leader of the Fourth of July parade, Lane was acting as a living memorial to the sacrifice and suffering white Protestants endured during the Civil War. But his presence was also a reminder that the martyrdom of his southern Protestant brethren was not in vain. Lane's second coming announced the public return of the religious and social values that many white southern Protestants had fought to protect. For example, in a photograph taken on July 4, 1901, the day of the parade and also, coincidently, Lane's birthday, the Confederate soldier struck the same pose as the one captured in a photograph taken during the war. The first image shows a younger Lane on his 29th birthday, when he was a member of the 26th Regiment. In the second image,

Colonel Lane is dressed in his old uniform, though a bit worn, and is wearing United Confederate Veterans medals and Reunion Ribbons.[8]

Although Lane ran a successful mill and store near Siler City, and his economic ventures were often noted, it was his well-renowned Christian qualities that distinguished him from the average businessman. For example, in her graduating speech at the closing exercise of Ore Hill grade school, also near Siler City, Lillian White remembered that "in his religious life [Lane] was unassuming and deeply spiritual."[9] In White's account, Lane's external characteristics, his "frankness and sincerity," were reflections of an inward life, what she referred to as "a certain openness of soul." For Miss White, as she is referred to in the published address, Colonel Lane had typified the Christian life described by the Apostle Paul: "How appropriately the words of Paul 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness' describes such a life!" While this biblical passage has been used to describe a number of good southern Christians, admirers like Lillian White elevated these public perceptions of Lane's righteousness to messianic heights.[10] In her closing remarks on the life

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mourning the Union victory. Historians have described the period of Reconstruction (1865–1877) as one of the most democratic moments in African American history (Du Bois 1963; Foner 1988). That moment was short lived, however, as southern white politicians used disenfranchisement campaigns to regain their public power at the end of the turn of the century (Cecelski and Tyson 1998). Those efforts were most clearly visible in the militaristic tactics of the Red Shirt movement, where whites used armed force to discourage black voters (Prather 1977). Although Siler City was relatively unaffected by Reconstruction — it was not incorporated until 1887 — its development in the early twentieth century was emblematic of the rise of southern white political power in the New South, particularly in North Carolina.

[8] Photos and descriptions are posted on the 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops (NCT) Web Site (http://www.26nc.org).

[9] Lillian White, "An Essay on a Distinguished Countyman," in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[10] Lillian White is one example of the influence of white women on public spaces and collective memory in the New South. As historian Fitzhugh Brundage has pointed out, white women played an important role in shaping the memory of a Confederate past in the New South. According to Brundage, "The historical memory promulgated by white women . . . shaped the civic spaces of the cities and towns of the New South, now increasingly important to southern life, as well as the lessons that those space taught" (Brundage 2000:131).

of Colonel John Randolph Lane, she asked, "Where can we find one so worthy of emulation?" This rhetorical question, presented on soil saturated with the name of Jesus, as well as the redemptive blood of Confederate sacrifice, came close to equating the Colonel with the Christ.

As far as I can tell, the 1901 Fourth of July parade was the earliest public recognition of Confederate soldiers in Siler City. A few years later, town officials observed their first Confederate Memorial Day, holding a service on May 10, 1909 at Oakwood Cemetery. Early on, both events would attract roughly the same number of people; however, the parades would surpass the reunions in size and significance by the end of the 1920s. Approximately 2,500 people attended the 1913 Confederate Reunion in Siler City, where Mayor L. L. Wren presented the Confederate Veterans with a key to the city, while 2,000 were at the Fourth of July parade that year. The next year, though, the July parade had grown to 3,000, and attendance was up to 4,000 another two years later.[11] This trend continued. Over time, the reunions declined considerably, but the parades continued to boom. By 1918, the Fourth of July celebration attracted close to 6,000 persons, nearly five times the town's population.[12] While displacing the Confederate Reunion as the town's dominant public ritual, the Fourth of July celebrations retained much of the Lost Cause social vision that southern historian Charles Reagan Wilson describes as "paternalistic, moralistic, well ordered, and hierarchical," parading these "southern values" through the downtown streets (Wilson 1980:100).

In *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, a skillful historical survey of American Methodist cultural practices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Gregory Schneider describes how white evangelical Protestants procured domestic spaces for familial religious practices within the pervasive patriarchal establishment of the Old South. Schneider argues that by the mid-nineteenth century white Methodists had domesticated the Old South "culture of honor," moving its public sacrifices of "place and station," as American religious historian Catherine Albanese refers to the antebellum order, into the family home and

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[11] Hadley 1987:25; Isaac London, "July 4th," *Siler City Grit*, 1913, 1914, and 1920.

[12] According to Census data, town population was 895 persons in 1910 and 1,253 persons in 1920.

individual hearts of Protestant believers. In effect, white evangelical Protestant homes replicated the plantation principle of hierarchical order in smaller, more compartmentalized, religious and social institutions. Over time, as historian Rhys Issac has argued (Isaac 1982), the spread of evangelical Protestant domestic space through individual conversion slowly helped transform the totalizing institutions of the Old South, particularly that peculiar institution that resembled a medieval-like feudal order. Despite this transformation (or perhaps because of it), a fundamental component of patriarchal order, what Schneider describes as the "image of a sacred feminine space to be protected from encroaching, polluting forces," persisted in Anglo-American Protestant practices in the South (Schneider 1993:xxv). And in an interesting argumentative twist, Schneider contends that a desire to protect the propriety of private domestic space is what drove white Methodists back out into the streets and other public spaces of their communities. As he puts it, "The Methodist rituals of social religion, in their separation from the world and their familial patterns of communion echoed this image [of sacred feminine space]" (ibid.).[13]

Engaging public spaces through congregational activities, white evangelical Protestants in the New South carried the order of their homes into their streets. Over the course of the nineteenth century, they grew bolder in their attempts, domesticating even the unruliest of festivals, Fourth of July parades. For example, Schneider points out that by the 1840s and '50s, white Methodists had changed their tune concerning the Independence Day festivities. At one point, just participating in the intoxicating displays of patriotism on July 4th could get a member expelled from church; but once the parades were "no longer beset by drunkenness and revelry, Independence Day celebrations [became] times for great Sabbath school jubilees, family gatherings, and pious sociability" (Schneider 1993:154). Citing numerous examples from the mid-nineteenth century, Schneider shows how, "using the Sunday school as their chief instrument, the evangelical churches turned July 4 into the

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[13] Schneider also notes, "As a man considered his estate, on which he founded his very self, he felt the most precious and most vulnerable part of it to be this secluded space that was identified first with wife and children, then with hearth and home, then with community and nation" (ibid.).

cult day of the Protestant God, American flag, and middle-class domestic circle" (ibid. 155).

The Civil War halted the forward march of white evangelical Protestants in the South, but only for a few decades. After Reconstruction, they reemerged with a renewed public vigor, staking claim to a southern landscape scarred by war under a triumvirate of Christian, Confederate, and American banners. With their renewed embrace of the American flag in Fourth of July celebrations, white evangelical Protestants in the New South publicly announced that they had not forsaken their mission to domesticate public space, transforming it in the likeness of their Christian homes and congregations. Like the nineteenth century Fourth of July parades that preceded them, the parades in Siler City were a public ritual display of the domestic habits of the town. With increasingly more public power at their disposal, white Protestants in Siler City could regulate Fourth of July activities. And they did just that, molding the parade in the "image of feminine sacred space."

The ritual performances of Fourth of July parades in Siler City reveal a moral order founded on the perceived purity of the white southern woman.[14] The parade activities reveal a white Protestant "domus," a term historian Robert Orsi has used to describe the "chief unit of social relationships and cultural transmission" among Italian Catholics living in Harlem during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[15] In Orsi's interpretation, the Virgin Mary, present as patroness, was the foundation of family and social order in Italian Harlem. In turn, the

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[14] My interpretation of this ritual performance is informed by the historical work of Susan Davis on Fourth of July Parades in nineteenth century Philadelphia. Davis argues that parades are political actions; they are "rhetorical means by which performers attempted to accomplish practical and symbolic goals." In short, parades are public drama of communal life (Davis 1986: 5).

[15] Orsi 1985: xix–xx. My understanding of embodied practices and the construction of locality is also influenced by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In addition to the historical category of the "domus," one could also use the category "habitus" to describe the moral world of southern white Protestants, yielding similar theoretical effect. Bourdieu described the habitus as characterized by the 'permanent teleological character' of its tools and institutions. For Bourdieu, the habitus is a product of history and "produces individual and collective practices — more history — in accordance with the schemes of history"; it is a "present past." The habitus equals embodied history: "the active presence of a whole past of which it is a product" (Bourdieu 1990:54, 56).

domestic "moral world" that she symbolized was publicly displayed in the annual festa, or street parade, in honor of her, the Madonna of 115th Street. Southern white Protestants also have recognized their sacrificial mothers, the "Daughters of the Confederacy." But in contrast to Italian Catholics, who "marched through the streets of New York behind the Madonna," white Protestants in Siler City processed into town for the 1901 Fourth of July parade behind a Confederate Soldier, the symbolic masculine sacrifice for white women and southern homes. Attributing purity to white women and holding it up as moral ideal, Fourth of July parades domesticated public space while calling on Christian men to protect it.[16]

For example, Colonel Lane felt that the martyrdom of his soldiers was the proper foundation upon which to build a redeemed South in the new century. When he addressed his buried brethren at Gettysburg, Lane told them that their "deeds" were the "pride and inspiration" of southerners living in the early twentieth century. And he assured his Confederate brothers that the women they had fought so diligently to protect had not forgotten their sacrifice. Standing on the sacred ground of a Civil War battlefield, Lane described how "the tenderest hearts and fairest hands of our Southland," the Daughters of the Confederacy, "water your graves with tears that rise from hearts full of grateful and loving remembrance of you who suffered death as champions of Southern homes."[17] In his words of comfort for fallen comrades, Lane steadfastly proclaimed that the sacrifice of Confederate soldiers should be remembered, not just in the South, but throughout the entire nation, because they were defenders of Christian homes.

In the moral world of Colonel Lane and his cavalry of patriotic riders, a southern home was synonymous with a Christian home, and in a proper Christian home the man was the spiritual head of the household.[18] When Colonel John Randolph Lane, the protector of white

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[16] A number of historians and interpreters of the South have noted that the protection of white women from all threats, including black men, has been one of the great racial preoccupations of southern white men. For one example of this argument, see Williamson 1984.

[17] Lane, "Address at Gettysburg," 5 July 1903.

[18] Charles Reagan Wilson notes that "Southern ministers also viewed woman as virtuous because she was the symbol of home and family" (Wilson 1984:46). Christine

women and southern homes, marched in for the first Fourth of July celebration in Siler City, he was acting as symbolic head of the town household.[19] His performance would not soon be forgotten. Although the public presence of the Confederate sacrifice embodied by Colonel Lane would eventually fade into a steely American patriotism, it would become the basis of a southern way of life celebrated in Siler City Fourth of July parades throughout the twentieth century.[20]

The southern public defense of domestic space, ritually displayed in the Fourth of July parades, was gendered, paternalistic, racialized, and hierarchical in terms of class and social status.[21] A typical parade in early Siler City would include floats, with at least one carrying a white beauty queen and another with a number of "lovely [white] girls dressed in red, white, and blue" (*Siler City Grit*, July 1911). Brass and string bands would accompany them, along with "decorated buggies and carriages and horse back riders." After parading through downtown, they would end at the town park, where, in 1911, "the exercises opened with the singing of 'My Country 'Tis of Thee,' after which Rev. A. H. Perry offered a fitting prayer" (ibid.). The mayor welcomed the crowd, which responded by singing "Carolina," and was followed by a series of public officials, culminating in the speaker of the day, which that year was Honorable E. J. Justice of Greensboro. Speeches gave way to food, and after dinner, as they referred to lunch in the South, there were a series of con-

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Heyrman considers the rise of "Promise Keepers, an organization [in the late twentieth century] that encourages husbands and fathers to reassert moral authority and spiritual leadership in their families," as the "latest in a long series of evangelical efforts since the early nineteenth century to position their churches as mainstays of patriarchal authority." I would add that Fourth of July parades in the New South are related to what Heyrman has called "ministerial efforts to meld the South's regional mores of masculinity and martial honor with the evangelical ethos" (Heyrman 1998:205, 259).

[19] For a splendid oral history recounting the familial dynamics of a southern mill town, see Hall 1989.

[20] For a historical account of the influence of Confederate tradition on the New South, see Foster 1987. See also Blight 2001.

[21] Daniel Lee has argued that after the Civil War, white evangelicals used Christian practices to "incorporate non-White others into the hierarchical order of White society" (Lee 2004:84). I consider the Fourth of July parades in Siler City an example of such efforts.

tests that included sack races and a greased pole challenge. According to local newspaper editor Isaac London, after those events, "The crowd then repaired to the ball ground, where the potato race was held . . . then the greased pig was turned loose" (ibid.). A baseball game between Siler City and another town would culminate the daytime events.

The Fourth of July festivities in Siler City were so popular that railroad companies added additional trips from neighboring towns to accommodate the increasing numbers of passengers. Even then, it was difficult to find room on the train. According to *The Grit*, "the coaches and baggage cars were completely overflowed, with scores of passengers finding room on the top of boxcars" (ibid.).

There is little description or evidence of black participation in the earlier parades. For example, surviving photographs from early parades show almost all white crowds, and newspaper accounts seldom mention the opinions or participation of African Americans in the Fourth of July parades, or any contestation or protest that may have occurred.[22] The infrequent inclusions are usually condescendingly congratulatory, such as the mention of Milton Foushee, "a good colored citizen who knows well his business," who prepared barbecue pork and mutton for the Fourth of July festivities in 1918.[23] The annual parade and festivities were a prominent part of early Siler City. During the period of incorporation, the rise of the Fourth of July parade as the town's foremost public ritual, with Colonel Lane as the sacramental presence of Confederate sacrifice leading the way, demonstrated the ability of white southern Protestants to claim national patriotism in their own interests. The public performance of Fourth of July parades and social activities ritually produced town space and sacralized white control of those public spaces, particularly downtown streets.

In addition to the presence of Lost Cause religious symbols like Colonel Lane, the early Fourth of July parade festivities were characterized by racialized performances. According to local newspaper, *The Grit*, the 1912 parade included two clowns, one dressed as a woman and both in "false face." Newspaper editor Isaac London and "The Grit's

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[22] Printed in Hadley 1987.

[23] Isaac London, *Siler City Grit*, 10 July 1918.

devil Brooks Harris" played the clowns. Over 2,000 residents were on hand to view the spectacle. In the evening, London led a minstrel show with local talent. The editor reported that "the 'coons' did their parts splendidly, and the continuous laughter that greeted them indicated the enjoyment of the audience."[24] The clowns continued to make appearances in later parades, along with "mammy" floats sponsored by the Oak Washboard Company, one of Siler City's first manufacturing companies.[25] In the 1918 parade festivities, "all the specials, consisting of quartets, solos, and songs by black face comedians were decided hits with the pleased audience." Blackface minstrel shows were a prominent part of the early parades, and local white churches would sponsor similar shows at other times throughout the year. For example, in 1920, *The Grit* advertised a "Minstrel at town hall tonight by young ladies of the Methodist Church for the benefit of the Church Building Fund."[26]

The parades continued unabated from 1901 to 1932, drawing crowds in excess of 6,000 people at times, until they were halted by the onset of the Great Depression.[27] When the parades resumed after World War II, they often would attract over 15,000 people, three times the town's population.[28] So when they ended in 1988, it was clear that things had changed in Siler City. That year, the front page of the local paper pictured a ten-year-old white girl walking the streets of a deserted downtown with an American flag in hand. The caption read, "Where's the parade?"[29] From 1988 to 1996, there were no town sponsored public Fourth of July parades in Siler City.[30] It was during this time that new migrants from Latin America made their way to the North Carolina town.

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[24] Isaac London, *Siler City Grit*, 10 July 1912.

[25] Isaac London, "July 4th," *Siler City Grit*, 1913–1915.

[26] Isaac London, *Siler City Grit*, 1 April 1920.

[27] The parade was interrupted briefly for a two-year period of downtown road improvements during this time (Hadley 1987:26–27).

[28] "Huge Crowd Here for Annual Fourth of July Celebration," *The Chatham News*, 14 July 1960.

[29] The Chatham News, 7 July 1988.

[30] There were three small celebrations in downtown during this time. In 1990, the local National Guard participated in "Operation Patriotism," which involved a handful of people running through downtown with an American flag. In 1991, there was a "Salute to the Troops" parade. And in 1992, the local Shriners Club sponsored a small

Good Friday Processions

The Mexican-American Catholic practice of Good Friday processions, also known as the *Via Crucis en Vivo* (The Living Way of the Cross), arrived from Mexico to Siler City in the 1990s. The first public procession in Siler City garnered much attention. It literally stopped traffic, as drivers pulled over on the side of road and got out of their cars to observe close to one hundred Latino Catholics move through city streets.[31] The procession route began just north of downtown, passed by two symbols of Protestant establishment, First Baptist Church and City Hall, and ended just south of town at what was then the old St. Julia Catholic Church, a converted home in a predominately white neighborhood. Dressed in homemade costumes, Roman soldiers escorted Jesus crowned with thorns, two thieves, and their crosses along Siler City streets to the back of St Julia Roman Catholic church. There, on this new Golgotha, the soldiers raised the crucified.

The visual passion they performed moved many observers. One of the observers on hand, David Kalbacker, a long-time resident of Siler City, a member of the Hispanic Task Force and Saint Julia church parish council, reinterpreted his position as an American after seeing the ritual performance: "The interesting thing is that Americans, as a nation, are very optimistic people, and therefore we focus a lot on the Easter celebration. Many Third World countries realize that there's a lot of sacrifice and suffering. It gives us the opportunity to refocus our thinking." Through a ritual encounter with the Good Friday processions, some Siler City locals like Kalbacker have become self-conscious of a perceived difference between their own historical experiences and theological practices and those of their Latino neighbors.[32]

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parade. None of these, however, were officially sponsored by the town of Siler City and did not elicit the response that the Rag Top parades received. "Local National Guard Member…" (Photo caption), *The Chatham News*, 5 July 1990; "Do You See What I See?" (Photo caption), *The Chatham News*, 11 July 1991; "Say Hey!!" (Photo caption), *The Chatham News*, 9 July 1992.

[31] Joyce Clark, "Headline: Newcomers Re-create Christ's Passion in Siler City: Holy Drama the Latino Way," *The News and Observer*, April 6, 1996, Pg. B1.

[32] Milburn Gibbs, "Hispanic Task Force Meets," *The Chatham News*, 6 July 1995, B1, B14. Joyce Clark, "Headline: Newcomers Re-Create Christ's Passion in Siler City: Holy Drama the Latino Way," *The News and Observer*, 6 April 1996, B1.

Despite a small Catholic presence in Siler City since 1960, the 1996 procession was the first of its kind in the central North Carolina town. Father Daniel Quackenbush, a Franciscan priest and pastor of St. Julia's parish admits, "I'd been a priest for 10 years and I'd never seen it done before. The first gentleman who did it here was from Mexico, and he had done it at home. It has pulled our congregation together and allowed our (non-Hispanic) population to see what devout Christians our Hispanic members are."[33] As the Pastor's comments suggest, newly arrived Catholics in Siler City initiated and carried out a tradition familiar to them in Latin America. News of the vivid reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ spread beyond Siler City. Attendance grew yearly. Pilgrims traveled from around the area to see the Via Crucis, including a number of non-Latinos. Reports of the procession even made their way into a Presbyterian sermon in Lake Wylie, South Carolina. The Reverend Sam McGregor, Jr., former pastor of Siler City Presbyterian Church, confessed in an Easter homily to his new flock that, "I am reminded of the stations of the cross in Siler City where the Hispanic man had to be hospitalized because he put the crown of thorns on his head to dramatize Jesus and he lost so much blood he passed out. Now that is a culture that understands Good Friday. I almost want to get in my car and drive there in order to experience the pain of Good Friday."[34] Public displays of suffering in Good Friday processions gained some Latino Catholics in Siler City recognition and, at times, respect — however limited or exoticized — from other Christians in the American South.

The ritual performance of Latino Catholic Good Friday processions marked a shift in the boundaries of public space in Siler City from established patterns of biracial Protestant local spaces to fragmented multi-religious and multi-ethnic spaces. Siler City was no longer a town with only African American Protestant and Anglo Protestant sites. It was now layered with overlapping African American, Anglo, and Latino

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[33] Carol Hall, "Good Friday Observed in Hispanic Tradition," *The News and Observer*, 3 April 1999, A1. At the same time though that the priest celebrated the procession, he also reminded participants that, "This is a day of fasting, penance and prayer." Joyce Clark, "Headline: Newcomers Re-Create Christ's Passion in Siler City: Holy Drama the Latino Way," *The News and Observer*, 6 April 1996, B1.

[34] McGregor, Jr. 2003.

Catholic and Protestant spaces.[35] Further, many of these spaces extended beyond the local. They were connected by travel patterns, communication technology, and monetary flows to communities in Latin America. Though the boundaries of racial and religious public spaces in small southern towns like Siler City have never been static or stable, the speed with which they shift has been accelerated by patterns of globalization across the Americas.[36] The arrival of Good Friday processions, a popular Catholic practice in a southern Protestant town, signaled a historical shift in the ethnic and religious boundaries of the town.

A Renewed Parade

The arrival of Latinos in the early 1990s rejuvenated the local economy, including a declining downtown. Latino stores moved into formerly vacant shops, contrasting older establishments. Some long-time white residents, however, misinterpreted these economic and cultural innovations, seeing them as further proof that Latinos contributed to the "demise" of their town. Threatened by the arrival of Latino businesses in their downtown district and the public display of Latino Catholic rituals in their neighborhoods, white Protestants utilized the ritual performance of the Fourth of July parade, forged in the early years of Siler City history, to reclaim public spaces. Led by a contingent of aging white Protestant leaders, the town renewed its most enduring public ritual one year after the first public Good Friday procession by Latino Catholics in white neighborhoods near the downtown area.[37] In these ritual actions, white Protestants remembered a time before tiendas and a town without Latinos.[38]

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[35] In this article, I have focused more on the historical production of white Protestant space in downtown Fourth of July parades and their response to the production of Latino Catholic space in Good Friday processions. But there is much more work to be done in terms of analyzing the racial and ethnic identities in relation to the overlap, influence, and contestation of multiple spaces in Siler City.

[36] For a survey, discussion, and theoretical proposal for the study of religion, migration, and movement across the Americas, see Vasquez and Marquardt 2003. See also Peterson, Vasquez, and Williams 2001.

[37] Milburn Gibbs, "First Rag Top Parade Big Success," *The Chatham News*, 10 July 1997; Joyce Clark, "Headline: Newcomers Re-Create Christ's Passion in Siler City: Holy Drama the Latino Way," *The News and Observer*, 6 April 1996, B1.

[38] The renewal of the Fourth of July parade in 1997 was a ritual performance of "lived

The first revitalized Independence Day celebration was the "Rag Top Parade." Residents and out-of-towners were invited to enter old-timey and classic cars into the parade. That attempt in 1997 drew 62 vehicles, ranging from a 1922 Ford Model T to a 1975 Granville Pontiac, though most entries were from the 1940s and '50s, a time when whites walked the Siler City streets in blackface during Halloween and participated in blackface minstrel shows in the High School Gym.[39] An idea of local commissioners, the parade transported participants to a time when the town was "alive," when "they didn't roll up the sidewalks at dark," and when "the Fourth was an all-day affair." Siler City Mayor Earl Fitts declared it "the start of a new day."[40] In 1999, the local paper asked, "What's more American than a Fourth of July parade?" That same year, the commissioners brought back Rodeo to the festivities. And in a perhaps unintended, yet symbolic gesture, the winning rider conquered on a bull named "Tijuana Joe."[41] Through their sponsorship of the renewed Fourth of July festivities, city officials staked claim to contemporary space by reenacting the past.[42]

Regardless of whether officials intentionally responded to the Latino procession, the public performances of the Good Friday procession through downtown streets and into white neighborhoods garnered much

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history." For a brief discussion of "lived history" in relation to the work of Alessandro Portelli, see Hamilton 2005. As Portelli argues, history too often "wears a capital H" and becomes "a faraway sphere, distant from the daily lives of its people or a crushing annihilating weight upon them." When this happens, the burden of history can "frustrate, and annihilate the work of memory or make it seem irrelevant" (Portelli 2003:9).

[39] One former white resident remembers seeing blackface minstrel shows in the High School gym as late as the early 1950s. Interview, June 23, 2005. And another long-time white resident confirmed this statement. He further recalled wearing blackface, which he referred to as common practice even for prominent Siler City residents, on the streets of Siler City for Halloween, also into the 1950s. Interview, 30 June 2005.

[40] Milburn Gibbs, "First Rag Top Parade Big Success," *The Chatham News*, 10 July 1997; Milburn Gibbs, "Independence Days Past Are Remembered," *The Chatham News*, 10 July 1997.

[41] Jeanne Pierce, "Parade, Bull Ride Highlight Fourth of July Activities," *The Chatham News*, 8 July 1999.

[42] Almost all of these officials were members of white Methodist and Baptist congregations. For example, town mayor at the time, Earl Fitts, has been a long-time member of First Baptist Church, Siler City, acting as deacon at least once in 1960 (Andrew 1989).

attention, announcing the presence of Latino Catholics in Siler City public life.[43] In the midst of these demographic and religious changes, town officials drew on narratives and practices familiar to long-term residents in order to relocate themselves and their constituents within town space. Not all Siler City Protestants, including city officials, were against the arrival of Latino Catholics, but most did not want to lose face because of it.[44] The revival of the Fourth of July parade is one example of local Protestant attempts to maintain social status in the rapidly changing religious, cultural, and economic landscape of Siler City. In the

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[43] The parades were, in part, attempts by leading white Protestants to regain control of the town's public spaces, which they felt they had lost to Spanish-speaking migrants. It is important to note here, however, that the renewal of the parades may not be just about white power. Reading it through that lens alone would be an oversimplification. The renewal of the parades was indeed a nostalgic yearning for the way things used to be, for the glory years of the town from 1945 through the 1950s, when downtown churches and business were vibrant, healthy, and growing. But this nostalgia was not limited to white residents. African American churches and businesses also prospered during that time and a handful of African American leaders have served and continue to serve as county commissioners. So it is also possible that they too would have their own reasons for supporting a renewed parade. Still, white officials initiated the renewal and planned the bulk of the event.

[44] For example, the same town officials that renewed the Fourth of July parade also sponsor the annual "Chicken Festival" every August, which began in 1989. The festival celebrates the value of the poultry industry to the town's economy, recognizing its long presence in Siler City. Like the July 4th parade, the festival includes old cars, a band, and a parade with floats. Additional activities include a "Chicken Legs Contest" for the person with the skinniest legs and a "Chicken Dancing Contest for the person who can dance most like a chicken." "Chicken Festival Coming," *The Chatham News*, 6 July 1989. The dual sponsorship of Fourth of July parades and Chicken Festivals and the types of activities at each reveal a tension between city officials' drive to rebuild the economy, which requires migrant labor, and their desire to retain the familiar patterns of small town southern life. On the one hand, the town recruits migrant labor, whether directly, by advertising for jobs in Mexican towns, or indirectly through poultry companies. On the other hand, town elites want to retain control of public space in Siler City. Issues of zoning and the regulation of modular home communities are all related to the town's struggle to retain control of public space. Downtown, where the Fourth of July parades take place, is key symbolic battleground. Further, new residential areas continue to follow de facto segregated patterns, as Latinos fill fields of modular homes thrown up on former farmlands. Just outside of town, modular homes line both sides of exterior roads like rows of corn, each perfectly spaced. Their symmetry conjures the

renewed parade, white Protestants revitalized a long-standing tradition of performing a southern way of life in downtown Siler City.

Conclusion

In Siler City, both Latino Catholics and white Protestants ritually produced competing conceptions of sacred space. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal have identified "sacred space as ritual space, a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances."[45] In Siler City, Good Friday processions are just this type of symbolic performance. Through the performance of religious ritual, participants collaboratively construct sacred spaces. These constructions, however, are contested, both within ritual spaces of the processions and the public spaces of town.[46] In other words, when Latino Catholics in Siler City performed the Good Friday processions, they constructed sacred spaces within the ritual event, for example, the space around the Christ figure and cross. In terms of phenomenological form, these sacred spaces may be similar to those created by ritual performances in other geographic locations, like Mexico. But place matters. The processions create — and are created by — a politics of place; in Siler City, until the construction of a new St Julia church outside of town, they occurred within historically biracial and Protestant controlled public spaces.

Reinterpreting the comparative work of Gerardus Van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade in light of cultural models of contestation, Chidester and Linenthal argue that the "positioning of sacred place (is) a political act," that "every establishment of a sacred place (is) a conquest of space," and

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ordered patterns of chicken crates. In older neighborhoods, though, the lines are not as easily drawn. There, Latina/o families may live side by side with either older long-time residents or upstart families whose lineage dates back to the early days of Siler City. But the predominately white upper-middle class of Siler City almost all live south of town near the Country Club, which advertises itself as one of the best kept secrets in the area.

[45] Chidester and Linenthal 1995:9. Roy Rappaport, though more concerned with phenomenological patterns than cultural constructions, also argues that sacred space emerges out of liturgy and ritual performance (Rappaport 1979:211).

[46] John Eade's and Michael Sallnow's description of ritual as "above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses" is applicable here (Eade and Sallnow 1991:2).

"the sacrality of place… can be directly related to a politics of property" (Chidester and Linenthal 1995:7–8). This approach to the production of sacred space within a politics of place is salient to a study of Siler City, where a southern history still impacts the landscape. In the procession, Latino Catholics constructed sacred space within a racially and religiously charged political context.[47] This context, however, has a history, and, in order to better understand how local strategies of power develop over time, it is important to situate the recent productions of sacred space within this history.[48] As Jonathan Z. Smith has argued, the historical-political context of a ritual is more important than its phenomenological form.[49] When Latino migrants arrived in Siler City, they entered a cultural context with a relatively long racial and religious history, one forged in the segregated factories and churches of the early twentieth century.

In the renewed parades, a contingent of white Protestants projected that history of place on to present space. They relived the familiar, using bodily performances and visual displays. Long-time white residents marched in the same streets they had marched in since the 1950s and their ancestors had marched since 1901. And, in the renewed parade, they drove cars from that era of post WWII prosperity, a time when white Protestants displayed the strength of their public power in a thriving Fourth of July parade.

Anthropologists Terry Rey and Alex Stepick (2006) have argued that "visual culture is indispensable to religion" because it provides a "chain of memory." Visual culture connects viewers to sacred spaces past, present,

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[47] My approach to the study of politics and place has been particularly influenced by the work of Anna Peterson as well as the theoretical approach of Manuel Vasquez. See Peterson 1997. See also "Latino Immigrants in the New South" 2005. Additional influences include Ireland 1991; Levine 1992; Christian Smith 1996.

[48] Emphasizing local history helps avoid the mistake of assuming, for example, that a rural town in the American South is the same as a city in the Northeast; or, assuming that modern institutional developments, such as multi-cultural education for example, are evenly distributed across national, regional, and local contexts. By including local history, I am maintaining that macro structural forces are enacted in local contexts, a process akin to what Roland Robertson has described as "glocalization" (Robertson 1995). For an argument concerning the uneven distribution of modernity, see Vasquez 1998. See also Latour 1993.

[49] Jonathan Z. Smith 1982. For an interpretation of Smith and a discussion of the term performance in relation to religious studies, see Bell 1998.

and future. And, again, these are contested spaces. As art historian David Morgan and Sally Promey (2001) have suggested, viewers inscribe visual artifacts with meaning. Just as there are many viewers, there are multiple meanings. In Siler City, visual culture has been a critical component of Latino Catholic and white Protestant ritual productions of sacred space in the Good Friday processions and Fourth of July parades. Both groups attributed varied meanings to similar visual artifacts, such as the Christian Cross and the American Flag. Those artifacts were tied to visual "chains of memory."[50]

In the Good Friday processions, visual artifacts connected Latino Catholics to place, but that place crossed over to sending communities in Mexico, El Salvador, or California and New York. White Protestants, in turn, used the ritual performance of downtown Fourth of July parades to regulate that spatial and temporal crossing.[51] Displaying visual cultures of the familiar, they tried to keep downtown Siler City from becoming a "Nueva California" as a Latino member of St. Julia Church who moved from Monterey County described his new town.[52] For white Protestants, the cultural chains of the renewed parades connected the present "start of a new day," as the Siler City Mayor described, to a remembered past "when the town was alive," as another white resident put it. Those material memories were tied to place, to downtown Siler City and its surrounding streets. Residents located themselves in relation to that place. And that place was firmly rooted in the American South. In the late 1990s, two chains of memory, of parades and processions, tangled together on the streets of Siler City.

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[50] As Rey and Stepick acknowledge, this phrase was used earlier in the work of Daniele Hervieu-Leger.

[51] Here I am influenced by Thomas Tweed's theoretical approach to the study of religion that emphasizes spatial and temporal movements (Tweed 2006).

[52] "Signs of Change" 1998.

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BRILL

Devilish Consumption:
Popular Culture in Satanic Socialization

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Abstract

Conservative Evangelical polemics against popular culture has often argued that it is a recruiting ground for Satanism. Popular culture, especially horror film and horror-inspired heavy metal music, has often been singled out as being the most explicit expressions of this recruiting strategy. Although the premises (and most of the conclusions) of the argument are untenable, they are not all wrong. Popular culture does play a role in how satanic identities are constructed. The cultural marketplace constitutes a "scene" that religious networks may draw on more heavily when traditional arenas for socialization are absent, thus making these networks stronger. This is an important point that applies to many kinds of late modern, privatized religion. The article addresses these broader issues by way of Satanism as a more specific example. It takes a look at which elements of and how popular culture plays a role in satanic socialization through a focus on the strategies for guiding consumption and production.

Keywords
Satanism, popular culture, media, socialization, consumption.

Introduction

Society and social identities are constructed through the continual activity of society's members in groups and as separate individuals acting with the internalized audience of "the Other(s)" in mind (e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1967). The activities involved in the construction of social identities need a scene, or several scenes, to take place, especially if they are to take form in a disciplined way that makes specific versions of society and social identity more likely. Churches, we know, socialize their

adherents through attendance in church, and, fairly often, schools. Thus, a certain amount of orthodoxy and -praxis are made possible. But if there are very few chances for *disciplina*, or, indeed, few organized activities to speak of at all — how do more marginal "subcultures" and their social identities come to be constructed and reconstructed?

With regard to Satanism, few learn their satanic identities during primary socialization. Satanists are few and far between. There are now and have historically been few arenas to meet, and common activities have been rare. Learning how to "walk the walk and talk the talk" thus needs to be supported by other modes of socialization. If media plays a role in socialization — wherein I include social learning theory (McQuail 2005:493–94; cf. Bandura 2002) — we may suspect that the mass media and mass mediated popular culture play an even larger role in the case of "the cultic milieu" (Campbell 2002 [1972]) or the "occulture" (Partridge 2004) to which we may assign contemporary Satanism.

How may practices of consumption play a role in teaching (and learning) values, attitudes, appropriate role behavior and other aspects of identity? A theoretical starting point is a rather common observation on consumer society, which sociologist Adam Possamai has formulated briefly thus: "…texts are consumed by the reader, construct who the reader is, and (re)define the reader's self in his or her involvement in this culture of desire" (Possamai 2005:66). In the active construction of who one is, or want to be, the "text" may serve up models for behavior. This, obviously, also works from the standpoint of an "institution," however rudimentary, which wants to teach what they and the identity they offer are about. The ubiquity of popular culture "texts" may thus be of vital importance for constructing particular versions of identity, especially when these versions are marginal and have a small social base.

Historically, the texts that "construct who the [Satanist] reader is" have rarely been made by self-identified Satanists. The discourse on "the satanic" originated before Satanism, and most of the ideas about Satan and models for Satanism have been generated by sources outside of it. Christian institutions and teachings have lent stability in motifs and motives with regard to Satan, but although Christian demonology has played an important role as inspiration, it has rarely functioned as a direct model. The satanic discourse has instead been constructed through oppositional readings in poetry, plays, art and folklore (e.g. Schock 2003;

Muchembled 2003; Russell 1986). Anti- and post-Christian philosophies of vitalists, decadents, nihilists and assorted esotericists from Blavatsky and Crowley to Gurdjieff have certainly also played their part, but contemporary Satanism is probably unthinkable without the romantic poets' readings of Milton's Satan.

This paper is not, however, about these historical sources and their application.[1] We need to keep the pre-Satanism and non-Satanist discourse on "the satanic" in mind, but the central focus in this article is on more contemporary texts. I shall use Satanism as an example of how popular culture may be used as resource for showing how to perform a marginal identity. This will at the same time address and shed light on a few elements of Satanism and satanic ideology. More particularly, a central aim of this paper is to show how ideological spokespersons of Satanism use popular culture to construct Satanism by explaining to what may loosely be termed "adherents" — prospective or more established — *what* is likely to be judged as in "good taste" to consume and/ or *how* to consume. Correspondingly, this also involves an ideology of what and why to produce. This is not a simple issue, and, partially due to the individualistic nature of Satanism, involves showing positions and topics with regard to strategies of consumption and production.

I will show the positions spokespersons take through what Olav Hammer terms "movements texts" (Hammer 2001:37 ff.) and "insider" media, both monologic and interactive. Monologic insider media are important for studying how the positions from movement texts are adopted or adapted by what in effect becomes a chain of spokespersons. In the interactive, dialogic arenas, exemplified here by discussion boards, we also encounter direct debates. "Newbies" and veterans further down the formal and/or informal chain of authority present their ideas in these arenas, and we may observe how newcomers drop out, adapt and/or adopt the discourse.[2] These three types of sources are each examined with regard to the ideology of consumption and production

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[1] I have covered parts of this topics elsewhere (e.g. Dyrendal 2007; Dyrendal forthcoming c).

[2] I have worked on this myself, but discussion boards as data and as arenas of satanic socialization have been treated more thoroughly in a fine conference paper by my colleague Jesper Petersen (Petersen 2007).

of popular culture presented in them, stressing how each of them serves to school the prospective Satanist. This is one of the ways popular culture is enlisted in satanic socialization.

Popular culture may also serve as an arena of learning independent of direct attempts at teaching. One observed pathway is through the way fandom inspires some fans into emulating their hero (e.g. Dyrendal 2005:49). Popular culture may also work, as media theorist Denis McQuail (2005:494) notes, through showing up models for thought and behavior, which may be deemed worthy of emulation.[3] As one might surmise from this, I use the term socialization to cover a broad range of social learning relating to processes of learning to navigate a subculture. Over time and through different media, this may include learning its symbols and values, its roles and modes of behavior, the range of worldviews and the limits of its discourse.[4] Mediated socialization is far from robust. What I present here is a form of socialization that is secondary, individual, and informal, and in the particulars of satanic organizations' presentation of content, mainly random and variable.[5] The article addresses the "satanic" content of consumption as well as the processes of attempting some degree of control over learning through consumption.

Since most readers are unlikely to have much advance knowledge of Satanism, I need to begin by sketching it briefly. As we shall see, it may be useful to draw some distinctions between different "types" for

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[3] The primary example of this in this article regards adolescent Satanism. I should note that I am not arguing that this "audience" is being passively affected by the medium of popular culture, but that they make up a small segment that take an active interest in employing deviant role-narratives and images for themselves. They are thus closer to the view of audience as "gratification set" than as "the public" (e.g. McQuail 2005:408 ff.).

[4] A similarly broad view on socialization was expressed by John Clausen in *Socializtion and Society* (Clausen 1968), where he argues broadly that socialization "encompasses the learning of motives and feelings as well as skills and cognitive sets" (ibid. 6).

[5] The axes formal-informal, collective-individual for context of socialization and formal-informal, sequential-random for introduction to content are all taken from a paper on socialization by management theorist Gareth Jones (1986). These are interesting lenses through which to look. However, many of Jones' specific theoretical predictions seem mainly of interest for business management, and will not be addressed here.

analytical purposes. These different types have overlapping but partially contrasting relations and attitudes towards popular culture (cf. Dyrendal, forthcoming b). Although I shall concentrate mainly on one particular type of Satanism, it is essential to include the others to show relations and contrasts within the "scene" of Satanism. First, however, I need to introduce some other aspects of the satanic scene salient both for understanding Satanism and Satanists' uses of popular culture.

Satanism in the Cultic Milieu

Satanism may most usefully be seen as a self-sacralizing, world-affirming, network-oriented philosophy or "religion of life" (cf. Dyrendal 2005:50). Alternatively, one might adopt the terminology of several Satanists and call it an "unreligion" or "anti-religion," but to the degree that one ought to use the term "religion" for Satanism, most contemporary versions of Satanism may be characterized as forms of "self-religion" along the lines described above (Harvey 2002; Dyrendal, forthcoming a; cf. Heelas 1996). The degree of organization is low, and ideological or doctrinal stringency likewise. These characteristics are also typical for the "location" where Satanism is mostly placed — as one of the "organized" expressions of the cultic milieu.

   Colin Campbell (2002 [1972]; 1978) constructed the concept of the cultic milieu as a theoretical updating of Ernst Troeltsch's notes on mystical religion. Some Satanists protest this relation, as they disavow and are uninterested in most aspects of the idea of spiritual seekership found in this milieu.[6] Since most Satanists seem to be secularist and atheist, it is quite understandable that they protest being lumped in with a category where *unio mystica* historically is the goal. Where the cultic milieu in general might insist that all religions ultimately express the same truth, *philosophia perennis*, Satanists might tend to agree only that "white light" religions are all alike — in that they are all bunk (e.g. LaVey 1971).

   Other aspects of the cultic milieu concept fit better: First, the strongly individualist bent in ideology that biases against strong organizations

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[6] E.g. High Priest of the Church of Satan, Peter Gilmore, a life-long skeptical atheist who insists (personal correspondence) that not only the leadership, but most members of Church of Satan have no such background or interests.

and clear-cut ideology seems to be similar. Organization in both cases seems rudimentary (cf. Campbell 2002 [1972]). Secondly, there also seems to be a partially overlapping, common interest in "proscribed and/or forbidden knowledge" (Kaplan and Lööw 2002:3). The interest in "occult" topics varies to a relatively high degree among Satanists, but there is an esoteric/occult strand within Satanism that ties more clearly into the cultic milieu. Indeed, the dominance of topics concerning "the occult" in the cultic milieu is one of the factors leading Christopher Partridge to suggest the term "occulture" as a better fit (e.g. Partridge 2004:67).[7]

It is primarily the relation between the sociological elements of Satanism and the dissemination of their ideas that is of interest for my purposes. Popular culture seems to play an important role in Satanism, in keeping with occulture being "a milieu that resources and is resourced by popular culture" (Partridge 2005:2). Popular culture "feeds ideas into the occultural reservoir and also develops, mixes, and disseminates those ideas" (ibid.). In this way, popular culture, drawing on elements present in occulture, re-package and re-present them for a wider audience, serving up once marginal models for selfhood and behavior, goals, attitudes and values that the consumer might emulate. For Satanism, popular culture may serve up examples of how to be satanic and what being a Satanist means. Conversely, once organized Satanism came into being, it could use different elements of popular (and high) culture to answer questions of where and how to look for inspiration.

We may see this at work among several different categories of Satanists, for Satanism does not cohere around a single model more than one should expect from an individualistic philosophy in the cultic milieu. Thus it is rarely useful to treat Satanism as one, coherent entity. Ideas about Satan and Satanism vary among those who call themselves by the name. One common theme seems to be Satan as a misunderstood rebel and the odd guy out, often in combination with a semi-traditional role as accuser. "Satan" seems rarely to be thought of as a symbol of "evil," nor as symbol of "good." There are, however, instances of both. For analytical purposes, it may be useful to look at particular divisions, of which there can be several. None should, it seems to me, be reified.

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[7] For elaboration and complexity, see ibid. 62–86.

Simplistically and pedagogically, I often divide contemporary Satanism into three more or less interrelated categories. First, we have what German historian of religions Joachim Schmidt (1992) dubbed the "reactive, paradigmatically conform" Satanists.[8] The second and third were dubbed rationalist and esoteric Satanism by Danish historian of religion Jesper Petersen (cf. Petersen 2005). The focus in most of this paper is on the "rationalist" type, but we cannot overlook the others completely. There are both important similarities between them and some vital differences with regard to the topic of popular culture. The main difference seems to be between Schmidt's "reactive" Satanists and the other types (cf. Dyrendal, forthcoming b; Søderlind and Dyrendal, forthcoming). It is, however, easy to exaggerate these differences. There is a partial continuity that is important to note, and the "reactive" Satanists are important both as background and as example of how mediated learning may assist peer group socialization.

Adolescent Satanism and Popular Culture

The reactive, paradigmatically conform Satanism has tended to coincide with what is elsewhere often called "adolescent Satanism," "devil-worship" or "pseudo-Satanism." Schmidt's term stresses that the paradigmatic ideas in such Satanism is taken from the dominant Christian narratives and symbols. They relate to mainstream religion by adopting the stories but inverting their value. Thus, the "Satan" of paradigmatically conform Satanism is an evil god, the devil as seen in the Christian religion.

This ideal type is useful for focussing on different trends, but reality on the ground is, of course, more complex. Although there are people who come close to the type — "inverso-Christians" as they are sometimes sarcastically dubbed by other Satanists — many adolescent Satanists today combine elements of inverted Christianity with romantic, "Gnostic" elements — and anything else from a wide range of available sources that takes their fancy. This is also what we should expect. Post-modern, eclectic *bricolage* has taken hold even among members of mainstream religions, so why should we expect those outside organized religion to be different?

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[8] "Reaktive, paradigmatisch konforme Satanismus" (Schmidt 1992:11–12).

Coherence and systematic thinking come at a cost. Although relatively "cost free" arenas such as organized Christianity and popular culture supply a sort of coherence to this kind of Satanism, any kind of totality is still constructed from a variety of elements. The available elements have changed. At the time Schmidt wrote, Christian pamphlets warning against the dangers of Satanism had long worked together with cheesy horror films in constructing a congruent set of narratives about Satanists. These construe Satanists as dangerous deviants, committed to evil, crime, and drugs, and demonic powers lurk in the background. This could be a heady brew, especially for alienated adolescents looking for a source of power. For those who encounter feelings of powerlessness and alienation, instilling fear rather than merely rejection can be attractive, and some psychological research (e.g. Steck et al. 1992) seems to support the common observation that this has played a role (e.g. Victor 1993).

Another part of the inspiration came (and still comes) through rock music. Particularly after the advent of heavy metal during the early 1970s, there was a musical style, lyrics, and aesthetics that looked at horror films and "the demonic" as inspirational, and which often combined them with an ethos of "sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll" (e.g. Baddeley 1999; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998) that was attractive to teenage "rebels." That these products were feared, scorned or demonized by mainstream society and Christian ministers — information often provided in detail by both mainstream and Evangelical media — only made them more attractive. If you wanted to learn how to be a feared member of "the satanic underground", there were media who told you where to look for inspiration and which goods to buy to fit.

From the early history of organized Satanism, writes Michael Aquino, the existence of such adolescent gangs of reactive, paradigmatically conform Satanists made it even more difficult to present an image of respectable Satanism (2002:111 ff.). The gangs would engage in small time criminal acts, desecrate graveyards, kill small animals and commit acts that served to bolster the unsavory image of Satanists that the name — with only slight help from popular culture — already conjured. For such adolescents or more mature, but still alienated audiences, the mass mediated construct of "the Satanist" could serve as a "ready-made" role to put on, and often legitimated already held attitudes and values about

deviance and delinquency. This may seem to be at its most clear-cut
with the 1990's black metal scene (e.g. Kahn-Harris 2007; Moynihan
and Søderlind 1998).

Now best known for the spate of church arson and several well-
publicized murders in the mid-1990s, black metal constructed Satan-
ism and its satanic image from, among other things "Christian scare
propaganda, horror comics and the shock lyrics of heavy metal" (Søder-
lind and Dyrendal, forthcoming). Christian scare propaganda, role-
playing games, previous metal bands and the fantasy and horror imagery
reproduced through several generations of bands all played a role in
constructing a "'Satanism' [that] was more of a strange inversion of
fundamentalist Christianity than anything Anton LaVey would recog-
nize" (ibid.). Whether we start this history with Black Sabbath, and the
Catholic demonology, Hammer horrors and Dennis Wheatley novels
which inspired their satanic themes, or we start out from more genu-
inely occult-interested bands, we see many of the same paths of inspira-
tion with resulting socialization through consumption: Demonology,
mostly filtered through popular fiction, film and music were used as
inspiration, and the older and established bands were used as unwitting
and mythologized exemplars by younger "wannabes."

The potentials inherent in a demonic image were utilized by segments
of the music industry, with bands packaging themselves as "the real goods"
through interviews, dress code, lyrics, and musical style.[9] After what has
retrospectively been dubbed the first wave of black metal (early 1980's)
had died down, a new generation of artists — often earlier fans —
adopted its tongue-in-cheek satanic and devil-worshipping imagery in
almost sectarian seriousness. In addition, they retained elements of the
morbid focus on death from their immediate colleagues in the death
metal scene. That scene, however, was neither "evil" enough nor stylish
enough for some. In the newly formed black metal scene, a network of
bands formed who focused on the satanic, and whose circumstances
and internal dynamics in the form of competition for what sociologist

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[9] This image was often dropped if and when the bands tried for "the big time", mostly
without success, in order not to alienate a larger audience — sometimes losing credi-
bility with their established fan base as a result (e.g. Baddeley 1999).

Keith Kahn-Harris (2007:127 ff.) has insightfully called "transgressive subcultural capital" — a form of symbolic capital acquired through transgressive activities — conspired to make them follow up their talk with fitting acts of church arson and murders. They took the influence from dark occulture to extremes, and fed the same extremism into their own influence on others.

A closer look at the Black Metal scene (e.g. Dyrendal forthcoming b; Mørk forthcoming) yields a more complex picture than that of a simple adoption of a Christian paradigm in a reactive manner. This is also the case with other examples of adolescent Satanism outside psychiatric case studies of loners (e.g. Lowney 1995). While the popular demonology has had considerable influence, it is, as expected from theories and studies of media consumption, rarely adopted *in toto*. First, the effect of popular culture was mediated through peer groups influencing the style and content of consumption, as well as values and behavioral norms. Secondly, we find that these individuals met with the idea of the "satanic" in different ways — some had met it in a collective and organized manner through church, others individually and informally, mainly through a random consumption of popular culture, again others in a mix. This makes for a varied response, for instance varied conceptions of Satanism depending on which sources they are familiar with, personal interests, and local differences depending on local, small group dynamics.

We can see some of the possible combinations in Kathleen Lowney's report from fieldwork with teen Satanists, where young Satanists combine rebellion towards local circumstances, partying, inverted Christianity, and eclectic ritual-making with elements from LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* (Lowney 1995). *The Satanic Bible* is now more easily available and it is still the main source for aspiring Satanists (e.g. Lewis 2002). But with the advent of the Internet, the available sources of knowledge and arenas for socialization and role performance have multiplied to include satanic websites, discussion boards and chat rooms, and a much larger variety of ideological texts by more organized Satanists. At the time when Black Metal was a scene of competition for extremes of transgressive capital however, the dynamics was mostly local. Ideas about role behavior were spread through the music and lyrics, mass media coverage of the scene, and for the insiders, through the channel of fanzines. On the other hand, the values and role models used to hammer out "Norwegian Black

Metal" were mainly derived from readings of their own subculturally relevant popular culture. From these elements, the entrepreneurs constructed an "anti-LaVeyan" Satanism more reminiscent of Schmidt's type, redolent with aggression and hatred of Christianity. But while other Satanists feeding from and into the dark occulture could sympathize with their emotions, they rarely sympathized with their deeds. Nor did they take their own transgression in that particular direction.

Rationalist and Esoteric Satanism

Adolescent Satanists leaning towards a reactive, paradigmatically conform approach to "Satan" almost by definition adopt and convert elements from popular culture products that catch their fancy, and revel in identifying with those that are likely to stir up negative reactions. When we come to the other types of Satanism, the picture is more complex. Rationalist and esoteric Satanism both, as I use the terms, refer to the loosely organized satanic groups and their ideologies. Most have a mainly this-worldly outlook, but the esoteric Satanists may include a more transcendent, spiritual dimension. The latter may believe in the possibility of an afterlife, whereas rationalistic Satanists tend to be more exclusively naturalistic in their philosophy (Dyrendal, forthcoming a).

"Organized", however, is a term that may be misleading. Although there are an amazing number of names of satanic organizations, few exist as real organizations for more than a few years. A few have managed to survive for a number of years. The only really long-lived organizations are the Church of Satan (CoS), an example of rationalist Satanism, and their offshoot Temple of Set (ToS), an example of esoteric Satanism. But although Satanists may be affiliated with something that has a name and a leadership, it does not follow that they are of one mind with regard to ideas. Individual Satanists from groups in both categories vary on a scale from mainly rationalist to being more esoterically inclined.

All known satanic organizations are low-cost. They demand little, if anything, with regard to collective action and participation and often even less when it comes to creed — though an ideological fellowship may sometimes be assumed. To the degree that a segment of group membership attempts to create collective activities, they have been unlikely to

have much success.[10] Thus, most activities tend to be based on individual interest. This is underscored by a strongly individualist bent in the ideology. Satanism is, in the words of CoS High Priest Peter Gilmore, a tool for living life fully, and a Satanist is supposed to be a strong-willed, natural individualist who does not conform readily to common expectations (e.g. Dyrendal, forthcoming b).

I focus on rationalist Satanism here. Many of the same things could be said about esoteric Satanism as well. Both spring from the same source. Satanism was born in the counter-culture of California, and it shares the ideology of non-conformity that has been a mainstay of consumer culture since then (Frank 1997; Heath and Potter 2006). Non-conformity, being against "the herd" is one side of the satanic coin, living a good life is the other. Connected with the first, we find a stress on transgression and elitism. Satanists are free to explore "the forbidden," and they are encouraged to do so — albeit within the limits of the law and LaVey's stricture "one part outrageousness to nine parts respectability."

This balances the transgressive element of Satanism with the focus on the good life presented in the satanic motto of indulgence and the self-presentation of LaVeyan Satanism as a form of Epicurean thought. There is a tension here, however,[11] deriving partially from the fact that non-conformity is supposed to be *productive* and the good life should involve some sort of worldly *success*. This results in an ambiguous position with regard to popular culture. On the consumption side, one is supposed to be a natural outsider, against the herd. Thus, one might expect popular culture to be frowned upon. At the same time it becomes important because the social structure of Satanism and its marginal status even within occulture makes constructing both collective and individual identity as a Satanist more difficult. With regard to the *production* of "popular culture," we encounter a similar conundrum. Worldly success is a goal,

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[10] Things were not always thus. In the earliest phases, from 1966 to around 1972, ritual activities and social events seem to have been vital to the establishment of Satanism.

[11] There are many of them in Satanism. Satanist and writer Gavin Baddeley sums up some of the central themes with regard to Church of Satan thus: "The Church of Satan… is a bizarre beast, sustained by a web of conflicting values and concepts. It is an anti-spiritual religion; a totalitarian doctrine of freedom; a cynical romanticism; a profoundly honest scam; a love of life garbed in the symbols of death and fear" (Baddeley 1999:67).

but success in a popular culture endeavour depends on "herd approval," and might easily lead to accusations of herd conformity and corresponding lack of genuine satanic qualities. (It has done so in the case of Marilyn Manson and Cradle of Filth.) As we shall see, satanic identity does seem to be mediated and partially learned through popular culture.[12] One question then becomes *how* this is done so that it may address the tensions within ideology. Which strategies of consumption and production are promoted by the satanic leadership and spokesmen to encourage newcomers to Satanism into becoming *their* kind of Satanist?

LaVey on Consumption

Sociologist Adam Possamai (2005) constructs two poles of consumption strategies that fit with ideal types of "traditional" religion and occulture respectively. With fundamentalist-type religions, cultural consumption is largely divided between products that are recommended, and those that are "forbidden." A product is linked to a practice, which belongs either to darkness or light. An adherent should keep to those belonging to the light, and since there are (at least some) organizational resources available to enforce this view, there may be negative sanctions involved with "wrong" consumption. Possamai calls this *hypo-consumerist* religion. On the opposite side of the spectrum, we find *hyper-consumerist* religion, where individualistic choice reigns alone (e.g. Possamai 2005:49).

For Possamai, "New Age" stands as a core example of hyper-consumerist religion. Again, real-world practices show some regularities and "strictures" on what is recognized as good consumption in "New Age" circles[13] well covered by Partridge's term occulture. We find something similar with regard to both rationalist and esoteric Satanism. Even with

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[12] It is *also* mediated through participative media, such as newsgroups, e-lists, chat rooms and discussion boards, and through a small selection of literature (increasingly available as pirated pdf-files). These arenas are important, but I will focus on them merely to the extent that they are relevant to the production and consumption of "enchanted" media.

[13] E.g. "organic" foods or books on reincarnation, astrology, and "healing" are right, fundamentalist literature is generally not, albeit with exceptions particularly related to apocalyptic ideas.

the weak social organization and stress on individual taste and individual choice typical of Satanism, there is, as expected, some guidance with regard to what may reliably be depended on to be the "satanic" choice.[14] There are some kinds of taste that are more likely to be judged reasonable for an insider, and some that are not. Judgments (or "tips") with regard to what is better may be found in all the arenas where Satanists meet with ideology, including those where they meet other Satanists. The crucial ideological tension here is between the stress on developing and trusting one's individual taste on the one hand, and the demands of an "alien elite" not to follow the herd and being brainwashed by "other people's subliminals" (LaVey 1998:79 ff.) on the other. This makes possible a distinction between the position that something is "satanic in itself" and the position that it is "satanic for me."

Some LaVeyan Satanists, like "Irreverend"[15] Gavin Baddeley and High Priest Peter Gilmore focus on *individual* taste, "what is satanic for me." Others are more interested in the *universal*, looking for "genuinely satanic" qualities, and may debate *what* makes a product satanic. In such cases, the judgment often relies on whether or not the product is subversive (in the right way), and whether it belongs to the mainstream (the herd).[16] This may go together with a tendency, noted by Baddeley, for some Satanists to fetishize Anton LaVey's personal tastes. LaVey based his own judgment on what was in line with good taste both on personal preference and on an assessment as to whether the product had the right qualities. His texts sometimes read like primers on his own likes and dislikes, but his preferences appear at the same time universalized as satanic qualities in themselves, and he made it perfectly clear that he intended to promote certain tastes:

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[14] Both CoS and ToS have a history of giving such tips e.g. by means of reading lists. I shall return to this below. However, unlike the more close-knit subcultures of black metal and oppositional teen Satanism, one is less likely to be ostracized by them for a breach in style. These youth "scenes" may in fact work more like hypo-consumerist religions with regard to restrictions on consumerist styles.

[15] This is the epithet by which Baddeley presented himself when writing for *Black Flame*.

[16] The broader, underlying topic is to what degree there is or has to be something substantial and common to Satanism.

> I wanted to tell your children what was RIGHT about Satanism: encouraging sensuality with achievement, outrage with justice, nonconformity with wisdom. Instead YOU provided media saturation informing them what "real" Satanists do, what kind of noises they make when possessed. YOU encouraged them to rebel by the aesthetic standards YOU provided, and still you grouse when they gravitate to Slayer, Ozzy, Electric Hellfire Club, Mercyful Fate, Deicide, Marilyn Manson, Acheron, Morbid Angel.

> Do you know what? I think those bands are great. I would also like your kids to listen to Liszt, Borodin, Saint-Saens, Dvorak, Ketelbey, Wagner, Puccini, von Suppe, Rossini, Romberg, Kern, Friml, Al Jolson, Russ Colombo, Nelson Eddy, Nat "King" Cole, and the marches of John Philip Sousa. But you never gave me the time to explain THAT to them. (LaVey 1998:6)

LaVey admitted several times that he generally had no fondness for rock music or metal, and he tended to see the kind of "Satanism" promoted in for instance black metal lyrics as misunderstood and reversed Christianity. He did, however, see evidence that heavy metal brought adolescents into contact with his kind of Satanism, and accepted that they brought their own musical preferences to Satanism. As we see from the example above, he saw this at the same time as a possibility of introducing the aspiring Satanist to a broader and better range of products and sources for learning Satanism proper. He obviously gave preference to his own taste as providing better introductions to satanic qualities,[17] and however much he may have advanced the cause of individual preference, there were clear limits to what he judged as "good":

> Music commonly piped into public areas is generally programmed so as to exert an influence on the hearer even though he is not listening. This type of music is utilized for lesser magical purposes (maintaining production flow, including eating and drinking, stimulating shoppers to buy, etc.). The music's provider employs it towards magical ends; those who hear it are controlled by it, rather than using it to control. (LaVey 1992:79)

As the Satanist is supposed to stay in control, and being the one exerting influence rather than the one being "brainwashed," some products and passive, unreflecting styles of consumption are discouraged.

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[17] I have discussed the topic of Satanism and popular music, with regard to LaVey's preferences elsewhere, and shall not repeat the details here (Dyrendal, forthcoming b).

The reason for his critique of certain styles of products may be found in other aspects of LaVey's ideas. One of these ideas is that there exist some combinations of sounds, some visual images, some shapes, which tend to affect the human psyches (its different kinds) in particular manners. One of the ideas behind his promotion of specific kinds of music and films is that the Satanist should familiarize him- or herself with these techniques, get to know and enjoy them.

To this end, LaVey supplied a list of songs, composers, films and artists that he thought self-identified Satanists might enjoy, or ought to have a look at for their own instruction, ideological, historical or otherwise (e.g. Barton 1990:157). For music, LaVey stresses the "diabolical" classical composers, performers and conductors. "The truth is," he said, "that classical music is *our* territory":

> Like scientists, or anyone else who have tried to move the human species forward, most classical composers were, in their time, denounced by the Church and the general public as being practicing Satanists, heretics, possessed and, in certain cases, accused of having actual pacts with the Devil. (LaVey 1992:152)

Assimilating what was at the time of writing (during the 1980s) a kind of claim often pressed against metal musicians to classical music, LaVey performs a historicizing move that enlists the classical composers in his own cause: they promote the body and its passions over belief, and they deal in religious subversion, hiding behind a convenient veneer of religion in order to work as "effective Satanists" (ibid. 153). The rhetoric works two ways. He is compensating for the lack of openly satanic products by constructing a historical lineage whereby a lot of products may be included. By enlisting classical composers as "effective Satanists," he is also enticing his alienated reader to take a closer look at historical fellows. Thereby, he is also guiding consumption in a desired direction, by making the act of listening to classical music transgressive and Satanic.

He does something similar with regard to film, where he asserts (through Blanche Barton) that, "A complete education in Satanic philosophy is available at your local video store" (ibid. 157). As with the example from music, he endorses the taste young adults interested in Satanism would be likely to bring with them — "mainstream horror movies dealing directly with Satanism" — but advises against limiting oneself to such films as they are likely to mainly repeat Christian scare-mongering. In

addition, he endorses, for instance, "B-movie comedies, mysteries and musicals of the '30s and '40s" (ibid.), and gives a list of more than 100 films that he finds likely to appeal, entertain and instruct.

The content of the instructions ranges from aesthetics, useful as a "how to" in finding a "repertoire of effective archetypes" for lesser, manipulative magic, via primers in satanic norms (e.g. Lex Talionis), to more esoteric instructions about how the human psyche is influenced by shape and light. For instance, LaVey includes Murnau's silent film *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens*[18] from 1922 and Fritz Lang's masterpiece *M — Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*.[19] Shapes, shadows and light are used (with sound effects) to create the appropriate emotions. LaVey (inspired by photographer William Mortensen)[20] has been especially interested in the use of *angles* in creating emotional disturbance in the unaware, and both films use that technique to good effect.

LaVey also includes Lang's other masterpiece, the silent film *Metropolis*, and other Lang classics. *Metropolis* is included for several, complex reasons, of which the ideological themes of the movie are not the least. *Metropolis* addresses several of LaVey's interests, for instance his stress on the natural stratification of society, and the creation of artificial human companions. The satanic "reading" of the film would generally be against the grain. The ideologically preferred moral of the film could be turned on its head, or it could be subverted in other ways. It would question the seemingly simple divisions of good and evil in the story, and in addition focus on the use of sound and vision to influence the audience.

LaVey thus guides the prospective Satanist in ideology and magical insight through advice on popular culture, what to consume and how to do it.[21] He is not the only one to do so.

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[18] This film has in itself also inspired death metal. To those who have not had a chance to view it, it is no longer necessary to even visit the video store. Instead, just check out http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6185283610506001721.

[19] http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2723662265706265460&q=m.

[20] Especially Mortensen's commentaries in his book *The Command to Look* (Mortensen 1937).

[21] Again, we may observe something similar in esoteric Satanism (e.g. Schreck 2001).

Consumer Guidance Online

LaVey is not the only representative of an ideological, satanic centre reaching out through monologic strategies with the intent of influencing choices of cultural consumption. The Temple of Set has kept the early practice in the CoS of having a reading list, made up by the same wide-ranging variety of texts for edification and entertainment. Several satanic websites have over the year practiced something similar, and generally we find here again the tendency to present something as "genuinely satanic," and tips on how to *see* this satanic essence, where and what it is.

For instance, at the moment *The Devil's Mischief*,[22] the website for a satanic comedy and novelty radio show, lists a number of comedians deemed appropriate and un-appropriate for satanic entertainment. The CoS-affiliated host/DJ/webmaster/producer writes that his "show steers away from comedy that I consider 'for the masses.'" Similarly, CoS-affiliated writers on the *The Sinister Screen* website offers Satanists

> an alternative to films and video made by mainstream media and to highlight those which are truly Satanic in nature. Within these pages you will find essays on a variety of different films and video from all over the globe. We will discuss why it is we consider these works to be Satanic and what it is we look for in these media we feel are inspired by that dark force in nature we call SATAN.[23]

As we can see, this is again more than a consumer guide. It also teaches what reasons there are that something is deemed satanic. By approving certain films as satanic and giving the reasons why and what to look for, *The Sinister Screen* is training the reader in reflection on what satanic qualities are, at the same time as it is giving a list of models to look at. This is repeated when, in addition to films, the site also deals with literature. Their focus is generally based on the "underlying message" conveyed by the film or book. Satanic film and literature are, in their view, transgressive. They force critical reflection on society's norms and create discomfort, causing the reader/viewer "to think outside the control mechanisms of the matrix and to consider what Dr. LaVey called 'The Third Side' to life's problems" (ibid.). This "third side" is the side of Satan

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[22] http://www.devilsmischief.com/ [last visited July 9, 2007].

[23] http://www.purgingtalon.com/sinisterscreen/ [last visited July 9, 2007].

as the accuser, taking "the third position" with regard to common dilemmas. The aim is to strengthen the qualities of the "natural outsider" by giving the reader more resources for overcoming herd society's programming, thus keeping "awake" in contrast to the herd of "sleepwalkers."[24] Learning these values and attitudes should, ideologically, come naturally to the Satanist, and the fact that these values and attitudes are naturalized and connected to certain goods makes the package a means of demarcation (cf. Featherstone 1991:63).

The lessons here are, of course, static, and not dynamically *tailored* to individuals, but they are informal and *met* as individuals. They are to some extent reinforced in dialogical arenas. Although the message-based reading of pop culture items is not the only way of rendering a product satanically relevant, it does seem to be the most popular. We can see the same strategies at work in the discursive formation of Satanism in interactive media, such as newsgroups and discussion boards. In the discussions, participants hammer out agreements on what counts as genuinely satanic, or sometimes disagreements through appeals to individualism and what is "satanic for me." Although the tone of discussion may be harsh at times, there seems to be a wider repertoire of reasons given for why something is deemed satanically relevant in the interactive arenas than in the monological arenas. This is not surprising, as there are more voices in play in the interactive arenas, and people come with different takes on ideology and different levels of ideological interest. Thus, the practical consequences of an individualist ideology come out more clearly.

However, there are different demands and strictures for different arenas, and there are several ways of socializing participants in these arenas. One source of power is *moderation*, where one or several participants act as "owners" of a board, enabling them to make demands on the style and content of other participants' posts. The moderator generally has to take care in how heavy the moderation is, as participants are generally suspicious of censure.[25] Another source of power in influencing discussion is

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[24] The latter terminology is from esoteric Satanism and its Gurdjieffian heritage, showing the close relation between esoteric and rationalist Satanism as long as one is not directly addressing the issue of esotericism.

[25] This is a complex topic. There are many different scenes online, and for some, it seems generally accepted that owners (e.g. CoS or ToS priesthood) may at times be heavy-handed in moderating.

by acquiring greater subcultural capital, in the form of longer time, more and better posts, or even institutional roles as leaders — for instance priesthood or above in CoS-affiliated arenas.[26] Generally, those who are more active, as well as the better writers and the better at giving reasons for their opinions, tend to accrue more subcultural capital and are able to influence "consensus" on a given topic more effectively.

Looking at the (moderated) Danish discussion board of *Satanisk Forum*,[27] one finds a subforum for discussion of satanically relevant products of culture, a trait it shares with several other boards. Unlike some of the others, however, the board has a clear owner, relatively strict moderation,[28] and a related demand (aka "polite request") that the participants give a *reason* why their product of interest is satanically relevant. The result of the clear moderation is, on the one hand, that new participants quickly adhere to certain standards, learn the limits of the discourse and how to express themselves (cf. Petersen 2007). On the other hand, certain demands seem more difficult to enforce than others. One demand that is often overlooked, is that participants should give *reasons* why something is satanic.

Instead, I have noticed repeated instances — not only on *Satanisk Forum*, but on other satanic boards as well — of participants following the common trend of just making lists of what they themselves are enjoying at the moment. That many of the commonly named artists and products (e.g. heavy metal bands, horror films) are "satanically relevant" may perhaps be taken for granted because so many of the participants seem to enjoy them. Another interpretation could be that participants feel the occasion is informal and social enough that they "merely" share their taste as a way of bonding with other participants by displaying their subcultural stance. This is certainly one of the effects. List-making of popular culture products also communicates an attitude of "I term myself a Satanist, therefore what I enjoy is satanic," an attitude which could well be strengthened by the common perusals of the products. Some ideologically interested Satanists may intervene with

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[26] This may be shown as an icon related to one's screenname. When this option is used, it is of course cleared with the board as valid, and obviously serves to enhance the writer's status.

[27] http://forum.sataniskforum.dk/

[28] Some find the degree of moderation too harsh and leave or are made to leave.

critical remarks or questions about what is satanic about it, but this is
not a simple topic. Criticizing someone for "running with the herd" and
falling prey to "other people's subliminals" in their choice of taste may
be answered effectively by the strategy we see from this poster: "Her-
dlings and those self-defined 'anti-herdlings' look to me like two sides
of the same coin. They are the same, their only different is that they start
from different points to arrive at the same destination."[29] I interpret a
note by the founder of the Norwegian Satanic Society on his board as
an expression of the same attitude, when he interrupted a stream of lists
of metal bands to say that at the moment he was listening to a Paul
McCartney album.

This is not the only form of criticism that exists with regard to the
consumption of popular culture. Another strategy goes in the other
direction: accepting the taste as personal, but taking issue with the way
the product is used. A meta-discussion from the CoS-associated forum
Letters to the Devil on the recurrent interest in the artist (and CoS rev-
erend) Marilyn Manson included the following comments:

> [Malathion]:When a person makes another persons status in the COS so impor-
> tant they are holding up a huge sign that says "follower"! I think when a person
> asks if Marilyn Manson is "really a member" it is as if they believe that if their idol
> is "legitimate" then they to are "legitimate" because they idolize him.

> [hickeyarmey]: Ravenhael, the herd seems to like to live through the personalities
> they see on TV, and I expect as much. I also think some who actually are of the
> Black Flame will seek out more publicly open 'Satanists' in the early days of their
> self-discovery. I read a few books on Marilyn, and was impressed to be honest, but
> in the end I live this 'Lucky Life' myself and nobody else can possess it or 'save' it
> but me. […] In modern times, we are bombarded with TV messages implying
> that we are equally big shots (or could be, if we buy this special product). Well,
> that depends on your definition, doesn't it? But the real proof is in what we DO
> and how we benefit form it.[30]

In this instance, the content of the product is irrelevant, but the attitude
of "followership," of unreflective herd mentality, is criticized in relatively

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[29] http://www.satannet.com/lttd/showflat.php?   Cat=0&Number=286943&page=0
&fpart=all&vc=1.
[30] http://www.satannet.com/lttd/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=259480&an=&page=&
vc=1. Original board spellings kept.

moderate terms. While the attitudes and behaviors that ought to go with being a Satanist are thus continuously brought up, they are more seldom taken to mean that any product is out of bounds. Indeed, because of the broad agreement displayed with regard to popular culture items, this would not seem necessary. When participants go outside what is currently "obvious" in their recommendations and tastes, it is more likely that they refer to forgotten bands or lesser-known films than to more mainstream tastes. One seems, at least at the moment, unlikely to accrue much subcultural capital by recommending Britney Spears. Since, however, Anton LaVey once declared Disneyland to be a source of satanic inspiration and other satanic writers have hailed Walt Disney's "wondrous philosophy" (Rust 1995), one would do well not to prophesize.

These critical interventions by board owners or other participants with more subcultural capital serve to remind individual participants — but also the collective generally — of the official construct of Satanism. It is, however, my judgment that participants on satanic boards — where participation is generally limited to those who identify as Satanists[31] — take personal taste to be the main element in deciding what is satanic. Satanism shows itself as a hyper consumerist (anti-) religion. Elements of "hypo-consumption" — guided, legitimized consumption — are nonetheless present both in the commonalities in taste as displayed, and in the continual discussions and lists over which products are satanic. We see something similar when we look at discussions about Satanists *making* popular culture.

Making Satanic Popular Culture?

I have mentioned a tension between the ideal of worldly success and the concept of "the alien elite," and that there may be a problem here with regard to *making* popular culture rather than subcultural niche products. This is because the LaVeyan ideology — and by extension much of the rest of Satanism — stresses not merely that one should do what

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[31] That is, the board requirements may say explicitly that you are expected to be a Satanist if you join. If you identify yourself as not being a Satanist, you may be asked to leave or be expelled.

one enjoys doing, but also that Satanists are "born, not made," and that they naturally belong to a productive "alien elite." What do Satanists think this should mean with regard to the kinds of "popular" culture Satanists choose to make?

For decades, satanic journals and "fanzines" were the main carriers of satanic thought outside the movement texts. They were generally geared towards a subculture, and the tastes they promoted were geared towards a subculture. They were at the same time central expressions of satanic subculture, and the central promoters of products they deemed belonged to such a subculture. Satanic musicians and other artists were subjects in interviews, and their products were objects of reviews. In addition, they would at times promote other satanic products as well, like jewelry and ritual objects. This is now continued by satanic websites, including boards. From observation, it is clear that these often announce and promote specific satanic products, ranging from books, magazines and music to erotica and artwork. From the discussions, it also seems like a generous portion of active participants buy these products. If they do not enjoy them, they tend not to say so. This continues the tradition from earlier periods, when journals like *Black Flame* (which is still issued) and fanzines also promoted Satanists products in polite terms. The products thus promoted often carry a recognizably satanic image or message. This is most clearly the case for artwork made for a ritual setting or as satanic décor. To take examples from recent products, we may for instance see this in *The Witches' Sabbath*,[32] which is a satanic porn film. Not only does it obviously celebrate the "forbidden" in mixing explicit sex and religion, it also utilizes enough of the stereotypical, blasphemous black Sabbath elements to put their "satanic" nature up front. In other areas, such as music and artwork, the content may not always be that clearly satanic. The CoS Reverend Steven Leyba certainly celebrates the erotic and is defiantly "alien" in his artwork, but this is not exactly uncommon in the art world. His *United Satanic Apache Front* is easier to recognize as satanic, with tunes like *Hail Satan (homage to Dr. Anton Szandor LaVey)*. A common thread is made visible in *Unspeakable*, the film about his life made by *Adversary Recordings*, which also issues CoS material,

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[32] See http://www.clubsatan.com/hell.html for a sample.

including a satanic mass and a CD by High Priest Peter Gilmore with tracks originally composed for "various sources, from b-grade horror movies to a ballet."[33]

Listening to the webradio *Radio Free Satan* brings one in contact with some of this material. Some of the content is made by self-proclaimed Satanists. Since the radio needs to fill airtime, most of the content is not. The specifically satanic content that has caught my ear most easily was not the few occasions when they discussed philosophy, or promoted satanic artists, but when they read short stories with "devil" leitmotifs.

From this brief survey, we may see that in several areas, there are examples of Satanists producing their own material in line with the ideology, and that this is also what "monologic" media are most likely to hold up and promote as satanic. Not surprisingly, and in keeping with the moderate "hypo-consumerist" element introduced in Satanism, the "centre" promotes products whose content is recognizably transgressive and satanic. Sex, the devil and traditional elements from "dark occulture" often play a role, as these are more universally recognized as satanic. This may make for subcultural success, but does not make financial success.

The very concept of being "alien" may make producing something popular and commercially successful somewhat problematic. We can see that this topic is explored in some of the interactive media. A poster on *Letters to the Devil* took up the position that, "Some Satanists are successful in conventional terms, because the things they genuinely enjoy doing bring them money and even herd acclaim." This poster uses two standards of "success" commonly recognized among Satanists. The first redefines "success" so that it stresses mainly the ability to do what one enjoys in life. This standard is widely accepted as important, but it seems to also engender unease, in that it is sometimes mentioned as a cop-out, a way of becoming "elite" without actually achieving anything. The other standard is in keeping with normal (American) standards of worldly success. The poster recognized both the varying standards of "success" and took a strong individual-preferences stance with regard to what was satanic. A more senior member, "Uvray," identified as a CoS Warlock, was more ambivalent, and responded: "This is the problem I've always seen with any of the arts. For it to be successful it requires a wide audience, so to a large

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[33] http://www.reptilianrecords.com/adversary/releases.html.

extent it is reliant on herd acclaim."[34] Another Warlock, "Dark," chimed in with a story about a successful artist who

> turned his back on a "successful" career in NYC — which was killing him — and decided that since what made him ecstatically happy 24/7/365 was just creating art and not marketing it, that that was what he would do.

The artist, it is stated, now lives in his own "total environment" (a LaVeyan ideal, for which LaVey claimed Disneyland an inspiration) in the desert, and only does what makes his life rich. Magister "Svengali"[35] voices a similar opinion and analysis when he states that, "The 'Alien Elite' are people who have, through their own abilities, achieved their personal goals outside the mainstream as much as possible."

Again recognizing both standards, "Svengali" agrees that fulfilling personal goals is important, and that these can be very different. He continues to stress this point, stating that the CoS looks for affiliates who "excel in their chosen area of interest, whether it be a field of study, a branch of science or technology, business, the arts, writing, making music, collecting, or just decisively living the life they choose for themselves to live." However, the central, satanic, "alien" quality is outside the mainstream, outside the "consumer culture that evaluates most things according to 'market value.'"

The natural born Satanists — who should, ideologically, be all LaVeyan Satanists — would not necessarily come up with something that appeals to "the herd." Some of them, like Marilyn Manson, nonetheless do. The dilemma between success and "outsidership," if there is one, is not solved. Both positions live on, enjoying a partnership that seems to be neither simple, nor necessarily difficult. Problems with regard to how success is valued do indeed show up now and then. There seems to be a distinct tendency for the socially transgressive successes related to the arts to rank highest in the CoS-affiliated arenas.[36] This also seems to hold with regard

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[34] For the whole discussion, which is enlightening in many regards, see http://www.satannet.com/lttd/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=286943&an=&page=&vc=1.

[35] Magister is the title of the fourth degree in CoS, and it is a title given in recognition of achievement.

[36] In arenas with looser connections and lesser demands on participants, financial or academic success seems to score higher, being closer to worldly success.

to the emic production of "satanic" culture. The few who do produce satanic culture seem to follow through with ideological concerns. To the extent that the results are visible, it seems like the weight on transgression and the "alien" wins out. The products that are acknowledged and disseminated tend relatively more strongly to explicitly appeal subculturally, and there seems to be a clearer demand that insider products appeal directly to "satanic" values and ideology. Thus, even hyper-consumerist Satanism makes some move in the ideologically expected, "hypo-consumerist" direction with regard to the production of new, dark occulture. In this manner, too, they contribute to making the "alternative" marketplace of the media a relevant scene for constructing and reconstructing Satanism.

Summary and Conclusions

Satanism in its rationalist and esoteric variants is primarily a philosophy of life devoted to the individual and its self-development and enjoyment of life. Although there are organizations, few Satanists have much contact with them, and that is mostly also what is expected. There are a few, rare, "real-life" collective activities, but they are rarely attended by more than a few people. Metal concerts may attract as many or more local Satanists as do explicitly satanic events. Satanists seem to construct a sense of individual, satanic identity as much or more from media consumption than from collective activities. For some, it is strengthened through participation in interactive media, where discussion of appropriate cultural products and strategies for using them is a recurrent topic.

   That media consumption should play a central role may be seen as almost given, considering the rudimentary organization of Satanism, the small numbers, and the absence of collective activities. This means that the context of socialization into a satanic identity is generally informal and individualized (cf. Jones 1986). In esoteric Satanism there is an initiatory system that makes a low level of *formal* socialization possible as well, but the particulars of organizational demand show that it is much closer to what is meant by informal socialization than by formal. Rationalist Satanism tends not to offer much, if anything, approaching formal socialization at all. Although individual Satanists meet many of the same texts, how they meet them, when they meet them, and to what

degree they familiarize themselves with them, vary widely between individuals. And when they do meet them, it is *as* individuals, not as a collectivity. This makes heterogeneity in the response to movement texts natural, since there is little chance of controlling the reading.

This situation is strengthened by both the ideological content of movement texts (i.e. the stress on individualism and non-conformity) and the way the different kinds of satanic content is generally met: variably and at random. This is another point where we find a significant difference between esoteric and rationalist Satanism. In esoteric Satanism, there are sequential stages of access to information and (to a small level) activities allowing for some elements of fixed and sequential learning, and foreknowledge of what the process (and the self as product) ought to look like (e.g. Webb 1999; cf. Dyrendal, forthcoming a). In rationalist Satanism, one may meet information about the ideological content of Satanism in almost completely random order. For both types, however, and outside a central milieu when such exists, meeting with other Satanists will mostly happen online, and practices will vary according to the particular scene and local variables.

By being the central meeting place for Satanists, the online scene becomes an arena for learning how to display one's identity as a Satanist. Through adapting to behavioral norms and adopting an acknowledged position in the online discourse, the newbie is integrated into the "community." The first display of belonging may often involve listing or debating popular culture products. Not surprisingly, "dark occulture" dominates in popularity. This is clearest with regard to those following closely the Christian paradigm, and who may also be inspired by the same "dark side" of Evangelical popular culture as is otherwise used in evangelizing (cf. Clark 2003:35–41). However, popular "dark occulture" seems to be a common source of inspiration for all types of Satanists, so common that it inspires many comments on which *other* kinds of products are satanically relevant. From all kinds of sources, it becomes clear that what is deemed satanic or relevant for Satanists is not limited to products commonly described as religious. Any kind of fiction, science, philosophy, music or art may be appropriated in whole or in part if it can be given a relevant interpretation, or otherwise inspire to insight or enjoyment. The romantic poets' ("secularized") reading of the traditional Satan, which turned the focus to (and thus "mythologized") the human psyche by way of religious themes, is thus

taken to its utmost. Any facile division between religious and non-religious art or popular culture falls apart. Anything may be read as relevant, anything may *become* "religion" in reading.

It is not, however, the case that *anything* becomes *satanic* in Satanists' appropriation or production of popular culture. Even though there is a strong streak of hyper-consumerist individualism among Satanists, there is, as we have seen, also an ideological stress on what sets the satanic apart. This fairly weak hypo-consumerist element focuses attention on the aspects of popular culture that, in addition to bringing enjoyment, will set the Satanist outside the mainstream, outside bland, commercial, "brainwashing" products. The products of the "herd" are not always those that the "alien elite" should enjoy, and in production they are not encouraged to make them. However, for the ideologically inclined, it is not merely a case of recommending which products to look at. The case of "elite" vs. "herd" is not (just) a matter of what one enjoys. The question of *conscious, reflective use* seems equally important. Although the Gurdjieffian idea that normal men are "sleepwalkers" is more explicitly recognized among esoteric Satanists, a similar division between the "brainwashed masses" and an alien elite who are awake is thematized among rationalist Satanists as well. The stress some boards have on giving good reasons why others should look at a product is thus simultaneously an attempt to guide consumption, a display of identity, an exercise in ideology and an attempt to keep participants "awake."

There are thus several levels of how popular culture may be present in satanic socialization. While being far from the only or the dominating theme, it is nevertheless a constant backdrop. Popular culture serves as a reference point with regard to delineating "the satanic" or "satanic for me" and for displaying satanic identity. It presents mediated meanings and packages of roles and values that some find attractive, stimulating them to take on a self-presentation as a Satanist. For some, it engenders a further search into ideas and a satanic milieu. Satanic spokespersons and movement texts refer back to this familiar popular culture and forward to other items of interest, showing at the same time how to enjoy popular culture satanically. The same topic is taken up in interactive media, where one may display one's understanding, be taken to task for it, and learn more confidently to embody the naturalized role of a Satanist who was "born, not made." Thus, the limited amount of socialization that

modern, diffused and rudimentary organized religion is capable of, may be supported by products in the cultural marketplace. Learning devilish consumption becomes a way to learn how to be a Satanist.

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Obituary

Åke Hultkrantz
(1920–2006)

The honorary life member of the IAHR Professor Åke Hultkrantz died 3 October 2006 at the age of 86 years.

Åke Hultkrantz was born in Kalmar, Sweden 1920. During the years 1958–1986 he was professor and head of the Department of Comparative Religion[1] at Stockholm University. 1986–2000 he served as chairman of the Swedish Americanist Society. He was also visiting professor at several American and European universities.

Hultkrantz began his academic career by studying history, comparative religion and ethnography/anthropology. He carried out field research among the North American Indians, especially the Wind River Shoshoni. His doctoral dissertation — with 545 pages one of the largest ever produced at Stockholm University — has the title *Conceptions of the Soul among North American Indians: A Study in Religious Ethnology* (Stockholm 1953). The dissertation gave him the position as docent (reader) in comparative religion and also the formal competence as reader in ethnography. In 1958, at the age of 38 years, he took over the chair of comparative religion at Stockholm University.

Through his anthropological training Hultkrantz soon exerted a pioneering influence on the study of the history of religions in Sweden. Earlier the "high cultures" of the Near East and India had dominated the field. Hultkrantz brought "tribal" peoples into the discipline, liberated from the "primitive" label of classical evolutionism. His knowledge of theories and approaches in the area where anthropology and the

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[1] At Stockholm University the discipline is in Swedish called 'religionshistoria', which literally means 'History of Religion'. As an English designation the University has chosen to use 'Comparative Religion' to underline the discipline's independence of theology.

history of religions meet was unique. Equally versed in American and European scholarship he often functioned as a mediator. His broad and refined culture-historical perspective was his most important contribution to the history of religions.

Hultkrantz became one of the world's leading experts on the history, culture and religion of North American Indians (in particular Plains and Basin Indians). Over the decades he carried out many field studies of the Wind River Shoshoni and collected valuable material, partly concerning customs and rituals that have now vanished and are forgotten.[2] But it was the macro- much more than the micro-perspective that characterized Hultkrantz. As an anthropologist, he was a cultural anthropologist, not a social anthropologist. It was his grand perspective on cultural connections and developments of the North American Indians that distinguished his Americanist research and gave it its specific value.

Åke Hultkrantz was a prolific author. His monographs (translations into different languages included) and articles make altogether 471 publications! His complete biography can be found on the web address www.antro.uu.se/acta/sams/hultkrantz_bibliografi.doc.

Hultkrantz' interests, reflected in his publication list are manifold. Here may be mentioned the religions of the South American civilizations, Saami religion, Old Norse religion, Scandinavian folklore, circumpolar religion in general, shamanism, healing techniques, the phenomenology of religion, the methodology of the study of religion.

In 1981 and 1982 Hultkrantz gave the Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen University. It is reported that efforts are now being made in the UK to publish his lectures in two volumes.

Finally, I can witness that Åke Hultkrantz was a most inspiring teacher and head of department.

Ulf Drobin

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[2] His wife Geraldine Hultkrantz is at present making earlier unpublished field notes available on the net, an initiative which is highly appreciated by the Shoshoni.

Book Reviews

Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum (ThesCRA). Edited by Vassilis
Lambrinoudakis and Jean Ch. Balty. 5 vols + 1 vol. Indexes. Los
Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004–2006. ISBN: 0-89236-788-1,
0-89236-789-X, 0-89236-790-3, 0-89236-791-1, 0-89236-792-X,
0-89236-793-8.
Vol. 1: *Processions, sacrifices, libations, fumigations, dedications.* xix, 612
p., with 139 plates.
Vol. 2: *Purification, initiation, heroization, apotheosis, banquet, dance,
music, cult images.* xxi, 646 p., with 117 plates.
Vol. 3: *Divination, prayer, veneration, hikesia, asylia, oath, malediction,
profanation, magic, rituals*; (addendum to vol. II) *consecration.* xviii,
346 p., with 72 plates.
Vol. 4: *Cult places. Representations of cult places.* xix, 485 p. with 60
plates.
Vol. 5: *Personnel of cult, cult instruments.* xix, 502 p., with 67 plates.
Vol. [6] *Abbreviations. Index of museums.* xvi, 169 pages.

This series represents a significant achievement in the study of ancient
religions. It presents the literary, epigraphic, archaeological, and icono-
graphic evidence for Greek and Roman Religion both in texts and
images in a systematic manner. This handbook will serve for a long time
as a firm foundation from which to enter into detailed discussions on
special issues.

This handbook is the second stage of three sets of fundamental hand-
books for the study of Greek, Roman and Etruscan Religion. The first
step was the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC),
which has since proved indispensable. In eight twin volumes, one with
the text and another with plates, published in 1981–1996, and one
volume with indexes (vol. ix, 1999) both literary and iconographic evi-
dence for every god, goddess, hero and heroine, and every personification

in Greek, Roman and Etruscan mythology is presented. The basic resource was established by Lily Kahil together with other scholars with the financial support of many academies and consists of iconographic archives, built on new and excellent photographs taken by museums from all over the world (as collected in the *Corpus Vasorum* series) as well as a bibliographic database. The systematic grid for presentation of the evidence in the LIMC is rather formal, recording details such as material and gesture, and in some cases rather abundant. Little attention is paid to religious meaning, to historical and local differentiation, or to epochs. However this formal rather than interpretive approach allows the comprehensive collection of the material to be used for a variety of goals.

The second stage is the set of books here under review. A third step has been anounced (IV, xɪ): "It is hoped and intended, to complete a third level dealing with those apects of Classcial religious behaviour which concern the conduct of everyday life, including marriage and death."

On-line access to the archives is in preparation; for the moment one can find (a few) updates to the bibliography of the *LIMC* at www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~m99/-6k.

Regarding the limitation of the collection to 'classical' issues: "the evidence from the Bronze Age is only admitted where it seems relevant to the explanation of later practice. Religion in the Roman world is considered down to but not including Christian practices. Etruscan religion is included for its kinship to the Classical, but there is generally less attention paid to religion at the periphery of the Classical world, unless it is firmly based on homeland practice." (IV, XII). Christianity, however, is not a religion which followed upon the Classical epoch, but rather one which co-existed for a long time simultaneously with 'pagan' religion, as did Judaism. Both Christianity and Judaism are ancient religions along with the 'classical' ones.

To illustrate how one can work with this tool, I take as an example the question of cult images. There are two articles: The first instance (Vol. II, 417–507) does not — with the exception of the offering of food to the gods — differentiate between Greek and Roman, between the historical epochs. In this part of the handbook the evidence is presented on the physical treatment of cult images: Bathing, clothing, feeding, crowning and venerating the 'living' image, as well as the prac-

tice of carrying them to another place temporarily in a procession, to the theatre, etc. The Christian tradition regarding cult images, which "came from heaven" or "are not made by hand" (*acheiropoietoi*), is included as well as the destruction of cult images. That destruction of images and cult places was not just a matter of a new practice arising from Christianity as a monotheistic religion is demonstrated in an article by S.H. Rutledge, "The Roman Destruction of Sacred Sites," *Historia* 56 (2007), 179–195.

The second article (Vol. IV.52–65) treats cult images in the context of "sacred places," but more historically. A first section gives a definition, a few examples (not exhaustive) of terminology and some considerations on the evidence. The article deals with cult images and the performed rituals which are explicitly directed to the image/god, concentrating on the few images known to have had a cultic use, apart from the thousands of copies of (originally cult) images, which now served as aesthetic decoration in public baths of dining rooms etc. A good bibliographical selection of monographs and articles is given for each section. A discussion follows on the archaeological epochs oriented to systematic issues and avoiding any evolutionary scheme (such as: first crude timber and planks without artificial treatment, at the end the classical masterpieces). First each section gives a comprehensive description of the problem, then a few examples in the form of a catalogue, some of which are shown on the plates in the latter part of the book, some in drawings or a plan, but often with reference to the LIMC. So in the archaic period the evidence consists of stone pillars, heads, and then whole figures. The promised section on the Roman imperial period is missing. There are a lot of special studies on this period, but regrettably one searches in vain for the comprehensive article in this handbook.

For information on rituals concerning images, however, one has to look in other volumes: (1) consecration of statues, see III 338 sq. link to ThesCRA II, 67 and the chapter on cult images mentioned above, (2) incense burning I 255–268, (3) libations I 237–253, (4) tables for meals offered to the gods (*trapeza* V, 357–360, cp. 231–40; *lectisternia* V, 405–412). A treatment of the topic of feasts is announced for the "third level" (III 305). The index is not very helpful in integrating these scattered parts. There is only an index of the museums. In the promised

coming volumes a further index on topics and the textual evidence would be of great value.

In some cases there are excellent treatments of the Roman imperial period, including epigraphic evidence (e.g. priesthood V 116–146), but in many cases this period is touched upon only in passing, whereas the well-known archaic and classical passages or Roman examples up to the end of the first century AD are treated in full. Judaism after the destruction of the second temple is also included in a few rare cases (III 100 sq.).

Despite the weaknesses just mentioned, this is a valuable contribution to the study of ancient religions. Like other handbooks, however, it also reveals the work which remains to be done. At its best, and often excellently, this handbook presents the current state of the art. Yet a great deal of work remains to be done on Roman religion, especially in late antiquity, including a treatment of Christianity and Judaism as ancient religions. In short: an excellent tool. And the "third level" is eagerly awaited.

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Bremen

Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margins. Edited by Nathan Katz, Ranabir Chakravarti, Braj M. Sinha and Shalva Weil. Palgrave, 2007. ISBN 13: 978-1-4039-7629-1.

This edited volume, which includes fourteen essays by scholars of Indic and/or Judaic studies from across the humanities and social sciences, is the latest in a series of striking efforts to bring Indic (particularly Hindu) and Jewish history, culture, politics, sociology, anthropology, religion and the arts into conversation with one another. The lead editor, Nathan Katz, established the Society for Indo-Judaic Studies and the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* over a decade ago to encourage ongoing scholarship in the comparative study of these two traditions. In 1994, Hananya Goodman's edited volume *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism* appeared as one of the first serious attempts to bring these two communities into scholarly relationship. Since that publication, multiple independent conferences have been held, and on-going groups have been established within professional organizations, such as the Comparative Studies in Hinduisms and Judaisms Group within the American Academy of Religion.

Such comparative study is not without its critics. Many scholars are somewhat confounded by work comparing two traditions that are seemingly unconnected by history or geography. The present volume, as the most recent expression of Indo-Judaic scholarship, successfully argues three points: 1) that there has, in fact, been historical contact between these two communities that deserves research attention; 2) that even where there has been limited historical contact, there has been shared experience, largely as marginalized communities, that brings fresh perspective to dominant, hegemonic narratives; and 3) that comparative study of Indic and Jewish traditions has substantial contributions to make to the framing of fundamental categories and questions in the humanities and social sciences.

The volume is organized into four parts. Part I (Chakravarti, Weinstein, and Marks) focus on historical contact between Indo-Judaic communities, demonstrating that there was more contact between these communities (despite geographical distance) than one might initially image. Part II (Holdrege, Sinha, Katz) focuses on comparative work in religious studies. More importantly, this section articulates most clearly

the theoretical contributions that Indo-Judaic studies has to make. Part III (Johnson, Weil, Roland, and Parfitt) focuses on studies of Jewish communities in India. This section in particular raises questions about normative standards of identity and the value of highlighting marginalized experience to challenge dominant identity paradigms. Finally, Part IV (Egorova, Kumaraswamy, Kumar, and Chatterjee) explores contemporary Indo-Judaic interactions in politics.

In addition to the introduction, two chapters in particular are helpful for sketching the landscape of Indo-Judaic studies in terms of what it has to offer to scholars in the humanities and social sciences. Holdrege's chapter traces the history of the field and articulates the reasons for and benefits of this specific comparative enterprise. Holdrege, along with Katz, is one of the leading spokespersons for this field. She notes that her own comparative work has served "as a means to dismantle the tyranny of prevailing paradigms and to construct a range of alternative epistemologies" (78) within religious studies. The comparative work of Indo-Judaic traditions raises questions about the "universality" of categories that have permeated the humanities and social sciences. Within religious studies, Holdrege notes, "we use categories as instruments of inclusion and exclusion by means of which we classify religious phenomena according to whether they share or do not share certain properties" (78). By examining indigenous categories from Hindu and Jewish traditions, we are forced to unseat dominant epistemologies that determine how we structure our view of specific religious communities and religious experience in general.

Katz's chapter focuses on Hindu-Jewish dialogue, and he lists several significant conclusions emerging out his years of research in this field. He notes, for example, that "dialogue" is neither evangelization nor debate, although these phenomena often pose as dialogue. Dialogue also does not occur when a member of one community speaks on behalf of another community, either in a public forum or in print. Katz notes Raimundo Pannikar's unmasking of "Hindu-Christian dialogue" as "Christian dialogue with Hinduism" (116) in which the conversation partners are on unequal footing. In perhaps his most disturbing anecdote, Katz recalls touring the Vatican Museum with a Thai Buddhist monk. First the monk and then Katz came across relics that had been stolen from each man's historic cultural community. For Katz, that

moment of standing with his Buddhist friend, powerless before a stolen artifact, illustrates the shared experience of two communities that have, more frequently than not, been ascribed marginal status.

The volume coheres largely because of the introduction and Holdrege's and Katz's chapters. The rest of the essays in this volume are much more focused, less explicitly articulate about the contributions that Indo-Judaic studies can make and more focused on describing ongoing research. Certain themes, however, appear repeatedly throughout these essays, and these themes tie the volume together. For example, many authors note the significance of "language," not only in its importance as a research tool but as a medium of identity for both of these traditions. Even a brief moment's reflection raises other issues related to language: sacred language; self-consciously constructed language (Modern Hebrew); disappearing language traditions (Malayalam), etc. Similarly, issues centering on identity, diaspora, missionization/colonization, modernity, gender, mysticism, food practices, and pluralism are common themes in the chapters, themes that deserve further exploration in Indo-Judaic research.

The volume's size limits the number of authors whose work appears. Fortunately for the field, there are numerous scholars involved in Indo-Judaic work who are not represented in the volume, but whose work appears in prominent academic journals and national conferences. A subsequent volume would benefit from including the work of these junior scholars. The current volume will be tremendously valuable for readers interested in Indo and/or Judaic studies and comparative studies more broadly. It is also highly recommended for scholars interested in how "research on the margins" contributes to the re-framing of fundamental categories in the humanities and social sciences.

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Les voix d'Apollon. L'arc, la lyre et les oracles. By Philippe Monbrun, Presses universitaires de Rennes, Collection Histoire, 2007. ISBN 10-2753504156 ; €23.00.

Ce livre est issu d'une thèse dirigée par Pierre Brulé et soutenue à Rennes en 2003. Il prend place dans un riche ensemble d'études sur les panthéons et les dieux du polythéisme grec, qui doit son impulsion première aux travaux de J.-P. Vernant et qu'illustre, côté apollinien, le splendide ouvrage de Marcel Detienne, *Apollon le couteau à la main*, Paris 1998. Tout en touchant des domaines très proches, le livre de Ph. Monbrun propose une problématique et un cheminement très différents, et l'on ne peut que se réjouir de la démultiplication d'approches qui contribuent à brosser une image riche et complexe des configurations apolloniennes. L'analyse des affinités entre les *modes d'action* de l'Apollon archer et ceux de l'Apollon musicien constitue l'objet central du livre. Les savoirs d'Apollon – notamment dans le domaine de la mantique –, son style de pensée et d'action, se révèlent solidaires de ses techniques d'archer. Dans une démarche que nous qualifierions volontiers "d'expérimentale", les instruments du dieu, l'arc et la lyre au premier chef, apparaissent comme les "réactifs" qui, appliqués à Apollon, "font apparaître tout un réseau d'associations et de correspondances qui font *résonner* et *raisonner* Apollon sur un certain mode" (293).

Ph. Monbrun part donc des savoir-faire, des techniques ; le plan de l'ouvrage en découle. La première partie "Les instruments de l'archer : le dieu archer est le dieu musicien" explore l'*intrumentarium*, arc et lyre, "en pays grec", à l'épreuve tant des pratiques et des usages : "La vérité des gestes : bander l'arc et la phorminx, deux opérations comparables" (42–56), que des systèmes de catégorisation et de représentation : "La vérité des termes : Ulysse tend son arc *palintone*" (32–41). Une place importante est faite à l'étude des documents iconographiques et à un comparatisme large dont le maniement éclairé permet à l'auteur de proposer des reconstitutions d'une grande vraisemblance que n'autoriserait pas le recours à la seule méthode philologique (voir, par ex., les belles pages consacrées à l'arc d'Ulysse dans l'*Odyssée*). Signalons aussi les pages très éclairantes sur les matériaux (cornes, tendons, boyaux, choix des bois, recours probable au palmier dattier pour la fabrication de différents types d'arc…), qui sont autant de contributions majeures à

l'histoire des différents instruments étudiés. Une même "harmonie *palintrope*", "dont l'efficacité résulte de l'accord entre des forces contraires qui s'équilibrent et se complètent", fonde la "parenté" entre les deux grands types d'arc, la lyre et la cithare (91 et ss.). Restituée au champ concret des techniques, son étude contribue à donner un sens très précis au fragment 51 d'Héraclite sur l'harmonie contraire de l'arc et de la lyre. Elle porte un éclairage nouveau sur les modalités par lesquelles agissent les "puissances de retournement" dans une série de mythes revisités par l'auteur – notamment la défaite du flûtiste Marsyas ou la victoire du lyricine Orphée dans l'Hadès –, ou sur les *concaténations* de catégories qui sous-tendent la figure ambiguë d'un Apollon décochant ses flèches douces-amères, ou propageant et écartant d'un même mouvement pestilences et fléaux. Particulièrement remarquable est la recontextualisation des sagesses apolliniennes (le *rien de trop* des maximes delphiques…) dans le champ du maniement de l'arc ou de la cithare, de la mesure et de la "délicatesse" qu'ils exigent (174–176). Cette première partie s'imposera comme une somme et une référence obligée pour tout historien intéressé par les techniques de l'arc et des instruments à cordes – fabrication, maniement, jeu –, et par les systèmes de représentation qu'elles contribuent à structurer. Elle exemplifie aussi l'importance d'un type de savoir concret que l'historien anthropologue des religions se doit d'acquérir s'il veut décoder le fonctionnement d'un système polythéiste.

La deuxième partie "Les savoir de l'archer : le dieu archer et musicien est le dieu omniscient" explore les modes d'action d'Apollon au prisme des savoir-faire de l'archer. "Au plus haut degré de la science de l'arc, toucher au but devient le résultat d'un état d'esprit et d'une concentration qui ne laissent plus de place à la *technê*" qui en a permis l'acquisition (197). Le *nous* apollinien est concentration qui frappe loin et juste, regard et projection abolissant les distances spatiales et temporelles. Il "fonctionne comme un arc sans bras ni corde qui se décoche lui-même comme une flèche qui ne peut qu'aller vers sa cible" (198). La distance, la "spiritualité" attribuées au dieu "qui vise tout dans son esprit" y gagnent en netteté, en définition. Le livre de Ph. Monbrun contribue à cet égard à la critique, magistralement administrée par M. Detienne, de l'idée d'un Apollon, "dieu de la supériorité morale". Il éclaire d'un jour particulièrement vif le paradoxe de la mantique apollinienne, d'un dieu

oblique, *Loxias*, à "l'esprit droit et direct", *noos euthutatos*. "Ses oracles portent loin et vont au but comme le font ses flèches, mais leur cheminement est ambigu comme le zigzag des flèches au début de leur vol" (215). La tension qui propulse la flèche et celle, analogue, des cordes bien accordées de la lyre orientent l'analyse de l'enthousiasme divinatoire de la pythie, l'instrument "musical" sensible et désaccordable dont le dieu joue comme d'une cithare, avec les mêmes précautions, en la faisant résonner au moyen du *plektron enthousiastikon* qu'est le *pneuma* (273–292). Un important détour par le bestiaire apollinien (216–247) fait la contre-épreuve des hypothèses, notamment en repérant les analogies entre les modes de propulsion de la flèche et ceux du dauphin et du serpent. L'étude de ce fascinant dossier éclaire d'une manière neuve et convaincante la figure de l'Apollon *Delphinios* ; elle n'en reste pas moins l'esquisse d'un autre livre possible, d'une autre expérience, où se dessinent d'autres figures d'un Apollon tueur et médecin, dévastateur et purificateur.

Il est vrai que le livre de Ph. Monbrun est le résultat d'un choix, voulu et assumé, et nous accorderons volontiers à l'auteur que c'est là une condition nécessaire pour pouvoir mener de manière rigoureuse et approfondie l'enquête "à partir du concret", de "ses logiques", "réalités de la *phusis*" ou objets techniques "avec les images et les constructions mentales qui leur sont associées" (19). Le résultat, très souvent convaincant, porteur d'éclairages inédits et toujours stimulants, en constitue la meilleure justification rétrospective. Et tout lecteur intéressé par les religions antiques et par les systèmes polythéismes tirera profit de ce livre. Mais si Ph. Monbrun est conscient des limites que lui impose le "réactif" choisi : "on peut se demander si la grille proposée a une portée suffisamment longue pour atteindre le dieu dans tous ses territoires" (294), comment peut-il prétendre toucher en même temps "un être profond d'Apollon"? Qui serait plus vrai que ses autres configurations? Qui les éclaireraient de manière privilégiée? L'ambiguïté est d'autant plus forte que les analyses prétendent "s'appuyer sur un horizon d' 'universaux', d' 'invariants' anthropologiques", "un sous-sol mental" commun à l'humanité", et il est souvent difficile de saisir le moment où le comparatisme heuristique si fécond qui fait la force du livre cède la place à la construction d'un "universel" de l'archer. Dans son principe, sinon dans ses applications concrètes, la méthode s'en trouve brouillée,

sinon hypothéquée. Nous ne sommes pas davantage certain qu'on puisse associer C. Lévi-Strauss, G. Durand et G. Bachelard avec l'éclectisme serein dont fait montre l'auteur. La recherche d'un noyau dur d'Apollon en relation avec un universel anthropologique présente un autre risque dont Ph. Monbrun se montre cependant conscient (20), les configurations divines du polythéisme grec sont plurielles, et bien des puissances sont conjointement impliquées dans l'action d'un dieu qui se présente moins comme une entité isolée que comme un mini panthéon. Si l'on peut comprendre que l'auteur ne se soit pas risqué à la tache titanesque d'un tissage croisé de ses réactifs – de son bestiaire notamment – avec d'autres puissances, on regrettera néanmoins que sa manière de formuler les questions laissent émerger une figure relativement monolithique et limitée du dieu. Ces réserves sur les présupposés théoriques de la méthode n'enlèvent cependant rien aux mérites d'un livre dont la démarche est originale et courageuse, et dont la matière donne beaucoup à penser.

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Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective. By Margit Warburg. Leiden, Brill 2006. Pp. xxx + 618. (Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions; vol. 106). ISSN 0169-8834, ISBN-13 (i): 978 9004143 73 9, ISBN-10: 90 04 14373 4. €187, US$249.

Some books can only be written by those who have been deeply devoted to a field of study for several decades. University of Copenhagen Professor Margit Warburg's monumental monograph on Baha'i is such a book. It builds on vast and varied data gathered through personal contact with Baha'is in her native Denmark, in Haifa (at the Baha'i World Centre), and elsewhere around the world since 1978, as well as on critical in-depth readings of the existing scholarly literature about Baha'i.

Not a Baha'i herself, not even an ex-Baha'i, Warburg is quite a unique figure in Baha'i studies. As an outsider, she has managed to stay clear of the unfortunate controversies that have tainted the field as religious leaders have sought to censor or rebut (often with remarkable success) scholarly findings that question their own versions of Baha'i history and practices. This gives her a rare integrity in a field of sometimes rather dubious academic achievement. There is, to my knowledge, no other scholar with nothing but an outsider perspective who has endured in this field as long as her. The publication of this latest mayor work only confirms her position as the grand (but still young) sociologist of Baha'i studies.

The empirical data presented, alone, makes *Citizens of the World* the hitherto most important scholarly publication on recent and contemporary Baha'i. The extensive data from Denmark and the exclusive data from the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, provide thorough insight into the developments and workings of the religion in two very different contexts and on two very distinct levels (the rank and file vs. the international leadership). The systematic discussion of previous studies and the comprehensive bibliography, as well as the elegantly condensed but pertinent outline of Baha'i history, make the book a must for all current and future scholars of Baha'i.

To set out to analyze historical as well as contemporary dynamics of the Baha'is from a globalisation perspective is certainly an ambitious undertaking. Methodologically, Warburg's approach is both quantitative and qualitative. Although she by no means claims that her approach can

shed light on Baha'i in every corner of the world, she still suggests that her findings in Denmark and Haifa, coupled with her more fragmentary observations from other places and her readings of studies done elsewhere, make her portrayal more or less representative of Baha'i at least in — but also to some extent beyond — the Western world. This, of course, resembles a standard methodological problem for macro perspectives in general, and for globalisation perspectives especially: How to make pieces count for a (if not *the*) whole? The fact that today the vast majority of Baha'is lives in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, in very diverse contexts, and in communities that have not yet been studied, raises the obvious question of whether — or to what extent — Warburg's findings are relevant also in their cases. Even though the examples she presents from these parts of the world are impressive in diversity (and they are mainly accounts from her own vast travelling and documenting), they are nonetheless too scarce and patchy to answer the question in a satisfactory manner. That however does not diminish the value of her findings in their proper contexts. Future research will hopefully fill in some of the blank spots in a field that has barely started to find its rightful place within the social scientific study of religions. Only then can the findings of this pioneering work be confirmed or challenged.

Warburg's theoretical contributions are far from insignificant. Throughout the book, and always in direct relation with the empirical data at hand, she addresses and comments constructively on a rich assortment of hot theoretical debates (about typologies of religious groups, globalisation, membership data, conversion, belonging, proselytizing, resource mobilization, religious organisation, millennialism, religious politics, and religions' interaction with secular society, to mention just a few). In doing so she raises several highly relevant questions in need of further discussion. Nevertheless, two most original features stand out as her analytical pillars: The combinations of micro and macro — as well as local and global — perspectives are sophisticatedly done through an adaptation and refinement of Robertson and Chirico's "global field model" into what she calls the "dual global field model." The latter consists of two parallel fields: the "outer" field which very much corresponds with Robertson and Chirico's well known model; and the "inner" field which helps identifying a particular religion or subgroup's workings in and between different spaces, as well as on and between

different levels. Thus she manages to map and analyze interactions among different actors, from individuals to national religious communities and national societies, to international religious organisations and the world system of societies, to humankind or global society. The other strategy that theoretically indeed proves fertile is her innovative use of Tönnies' old sociological concepts *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in accounting for the relative success and failure of different Baha'i practices and policies. By developing and fusing these perspectives, not only does she offer a new theoretical framework for understanding the working of Baha'i in a globalized world, but also for understanding the workings of other religions with a universal agenda, and even the roles of non-religious organizations that have international ambitions. *Citizens of the World* is therefore of interest far beyond Baha'i studies, and also well beyond Religious Studies.

Baha'is are usually keen on knowing what is written about them. Danish Baha'is have already taken great interest in the study, and I am sure the same goes for the international leadership. Undoubtedly it will also affect their thinking. Warburg's assessment of a variety of strategies that the Baha'is have employed so far, is likely to be taken into serious account as their new policies are shaped. In the book's preface Warburg expresses her humility in dealing with a religion that she herself is not part of. When approaching delicate issues, such as topics of intra-religious tension, she goes fairly light on them. This can be seen as a respectful gesture. But it can also be turned into a critique by saying that she sometimes too easily reproduces, and does not challenge, on sociological grounds, i.e. the claim that the nine male members of the Universal House of Justice (the top religious and administrative body of Baha'i) do not have power as individuals.

Obviously, there are a lot more to be said about Warburg's thick description and meticulous analysis of Baha'i. But these things will without doubt be said in the time to come as this newly born classic in Baha'i studies, with its significant contribution to broader theoretical approaches to globalisation, most certainly should become widely read and discussed.

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Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death. By
Elliot R. Wolfson. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 2006.
Pp. xv + 327 (The Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies, vol. 5).
ISBN 0-520-24619-5 (hardcover) £26.95/$45.00.

The interpretation of kabbalistic literature is a notoriously difficult
task. It has to take into account that these texts are characterized by
many layers of *intertextuality* — the continuous presence, even if con-
cealed, of biblical, rabbinical, and philosophical literature —, by *mul-
tivalence* — sentences and words have multiple meanings and are
consciously used in more than one possible reading —, and by strate-
gies of *concealment* that tend to reveal meaning only to those who can
read between the lines and are able to grasp the hidden dimensions of
the text. Consequently, reading these texts is a creative process in itself,
as the reader becomes part of the *texture* that constitutes kabbalistic
literature; and the text becomes *present* in the very process of reading.
For historians of religion who are trained to limit their interpretation to
philological analysis, to the history of ideas, and to the contextualiza-
tion of texts, engaging kabbalistic literature can be quite challenging.

Elliot R. Wolfson does not have this problem. He is perfectly aware of
the benefits of historical rigor and bases his argument on an extensive —
and in fact impressive — knowledge of primary literature, but he con-
sciously goes beyond such analysis and sets out to offer a deeper
understanding of kabbalistic reasoning. For doing so, he makes use of
twentieth-century philosophy. Phenomenological continental philoso-
phy and what sometimes is vaguely referred to as "postmodern" phi-
losophy, are particularly worthwhile for exploring the many dimensions
of kabbalistic texts, for the simple reason that this philosophy is also
characterized by intertextuality, multivalence, a dialectic of conceal-
ment and revelation of truth, and the approach of texts as textures in
which the reader plays a decisive role and the time gap between texts
and reader is invalidated.

Alef, Mem, Tau is based on the Taubman Lectures that Wolfson deliv-
ered at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2001. For the publica-
tion, he added two chapters to the three lectures that frame his overall
argument and clarify the philosophical tradition he is positioning himself
in. As a consequence, the book is very well structured and the argument

is logically worked out, taking the reader on an adventurous journey through the many dimensions and paradoxes of kabbalistic literature, as well as modern philosophy. The task of the book is "to elucidate herme-neutically the correlation of time, truth, and death as may be educed from works of kabbalistic theosophy" (61). Wolfson frames this endeavor in a reflection on each of the letters in the Hebrew word for "truth," *emet*. From late antiquity, a tradition has been transmitted in the name of Simeon ben Laquish, referring to the fact that the word *emet* is composed of the three letters *alef, mem*, and *tau* that are the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, "signifying thereby that truth is compre-hensive of all the semiotic ciphers that weave the fabric of the holy language" (61).

The decision to write two lengthy chapters as preparations for the three lectures that comprise chapters 3–5 is beneficial to the overall scope of Wolfson's endeavor. In fact, the 'introductory' chapters form more than half of the whole book and contain the main argument of Wolfson's interpretation. In chapter 1, the author gives a detailed account of concepts of time in phenomenological tradition, with a spe-cial focus on Martin Heidegger's consciously paradoxical philosophy. Although Wolfson explores possible historical influences of kabbalistic thought on Heidegger — especially through Böhme, Schelling, and German Idealism — his argument is not dependent on those influences only. As he explains in an important methodological passage, he has "found in the words of Heidegger a key to unlock the bahiric symbol-ism. [...] In spite of the blatant differences between medieval kabba-lists and Heidegger, too obvious to warrant delineation, applying the poetic thinking of the latter to the former is justifiable on two accounts" (121). The first is the historical connection with kabbalah that cannot be ruled out unequivocally. "The second rationale for turning to Heidegger to explicate medieval kabbalistic symbolism is the significant conceptual affinities between the two ways of thinking." Consequently, "it is perfectly reasonable to propose that a thinker like Heidegger could provide a meta-discourse to disclose structures of thought in kabbalistic literature" (122). This clarification is a well-taken response to Wolfson's critics who reproach him for dehistoricizing medieval kabbalah.

In chapters 3–5, Wolfson excellently demonstrates the usefulness of philosophical analysis for illuminating kabbalistic thinking. Reading

these lectures is a fascinating encounter with bahiric and zoharic litera-
ture that opens up many new vistas for interpretation, too numerous to
be reviewed here in detail. The author makes use of a cornucopia of
relevant kabbalistic sources to make his point. At times he also refers to
Indian philosophical and religious traditions (see, e.g., pp. 74 and 132),
which seems superfluous because such a non-contextualized compari-
son does not really add to his argument. But this is a marginal aspect.
What is more important to note is the fact that Wolfson's analysis leads
to relevant conclusions with regard to widely held presuppositions
about western culture in general, and Judaism in particular. Wolfson
himself mentions two of them: "First, it is not viable to depict tempo-
rality in opposition to or separate from spatiality in Judaism, let alone
to privilege the former as the genuine mark of Hebrew spirituality"
(55). It is the temporality of space and the spatiality of time that is
characteristic of kabbalistic spirituality. A second assumption is also
challenged by Wolfson's analysis: The distinction between linear and
circular concepts of time — the arrow and the circle — "a crucial
dichotomy that has shaped conceptions of temporality in Western
thought, is in fact false; the two cannot so easily be separated" (56). In
fact, the lack of a clear distinction between past, present and future is
not only characteristic of kabbalistic literature, but already found in
rabbinic sources. This leads to a third important insight: The kabbalists
stood in a rabbinic tradition, which they adopted and responded to in
a radical philosophical way; "the mystical sensibility is a deepening of
an approach found in older rabbinic sources" (63, see also 57).

Alef, Mem, Tau is a major contribution to the academic study of kab-
balah. Due to its clear structure and sound argument, it is also a very
good introduction to Elliot R. Wolfson's rich oeuvre that stands out as
one of the best interpretations of kabbalah today. What is more, this
work also makes clear that Wolfson has to be ranked among the most
profound and original philosophical thinkers in contemporary intel-
lectual discourse.

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Books Received

Beduhn, Jason, and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith. The Christian Encounter with Manichaeism in the Acts of Archelaus*. Series: Nag Hammadi & Manichaean Studies — Leiden, Brill, 2007, viii + 184 pp., €89.00, ISBN 978-9004-16180-1 (hb.).

Courville, Mathieu E. (Ed.), *The Next Step in Studying Religion. A Graduate's Guide* — London, New York, Continuum, 2007, viii + 238 pp., £19.99, ISBN 978-0-8264-9843-4 (pbk.).

Gathercole, Simon, *The Gospel of Judas. Rewriting Early Christianity* — Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, vii + 199 pp., £16.99, ISBN 978-0-19-922584-2 (hb.).

Griffth, Sidney H., *The Church in the Shadow of Mosque. Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* — Princeton, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2007, xiii + 220 pp., £19.95, ISBN 978-0-691-13015-6 (hb.).

Halbertal, Moshe, and Donniel Hartman (Eds.), *Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life* — London, New York, Continuum, 2007, 208 pp., £16.99, ISBN 978-0-8264-9668-3 (pbk.).

Hinnells, John, and Alan Williams (Eds.), *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*. Series: Routledge South Asian Religion — New York, London, Routledge, 2007, xiv + 290 pp., £85.00, ISBN 978-0-415-44366-1 (hb.).

Klostermaier, Klaus K., *A Survey of Hinduism*. Third Edition — Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, xviii + 700 pp., £39.95, ISBN 978-0-7914-7081-7 (hb.).

Myers, Jody, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest. The Kabbalah Center in America*. Series: Religion, Health, and Healing — Westport (Connecticut), London, Praeger, 2007, xiv + 254 pp., £27.95, ISBN 978-0-275-98940-8 (hb.).

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Editorial

The Challenge of Religious Education for the History of Religions

In many countries, religious education is no longer confined to religious instruction organised by religious communities, but *education about religion, religions and religious diversity* has become part of school curricula. If for the right reasons or not, the importance of knowledge about different religions is now generally acknowledged and there are political efforts to implement school education about religions at national and international levels.

Even though this regards the very subject matter of the History of Religions (or: Study of Religions), only few scholars from this discipline have contributed to the debate about education about religions in school contexts. Therefore, this field has largely been left to people with a religious rather than scholarly interest in school education about religions, such as representatives of religious communities or religiously motivated politicians. However, there are important exceptions, individual scholars in the study of religions who have developed concepts for school education about religions and have taken part in the related political and educational debates. This theme issue of *Numen* comprises articles by scholars who, each in his or her own context, have been involved in this topic for years. Not only have they used their expertise in the study of religions for the analysis of models of education about religions, but they have helped to shape education about religions in their countries and elsewhere, be it with respect to general academic concepts, curriculum development, syllabuses or teaching material.

Rather than relying on the initiative of individual scholars, I think, the discipline of the study of religions needs to develop a didactic branch. Otherwise, the important field of education about religions (in school and other educational contexts) will continue to be left mainly

to other interest groups, possibly with religious or anti-religious agendas, while the knowledge produced by the study of religions is ignored. However, as recent political and public debates about religion, religions and religious diversity have shown, the expertise of the academic study of religions is needed also beyond academic contexts. The articles in this theme issue may serve to broaden the discussion within the study of religions about its relation to education about religion/s in various contexts.

Wanda Alberts

RS based RE in Public Schools: A Must for a Secular State

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Abstract

This article is a reasoned, normative argument for making religion education (RE) a separate, compulsory, time-tabled and totally normal school subject at all levels in public schools. With reference to *Religion* (RE) in Danish upper-secondary school as well as to the way Danish departments for the study of religions (RS) educate *Religion* teachers, key contents and principles of an RS based RE are outlined. It is stressed that only the historical and comparative study of religions can provide the scientific basis for RE, and that it must be the RS departments that educate RE teachers. It is, furthermore, suggested that normalisation of RE in public schools be added to defining characteristics of a secular state, and that scholars of religion engage not only in studies of RE but also in establishing RS based RE.

The *raison d'être* of RE (and RS)

In 1995, following a seminar and report on "Studying religion in social sciences at school" (Palmer 1995), the Director of the Council of Europe's *School, Out-of-School and Higher Education* directorate, asked me to write a booklet. The booklet should help realize the report's recommendation that a secular, non-confessional religion education (RE), based on the academic study of religions (RS), be established in the member states.

The manuscript (Jensen 1996), intended for decision-making outsiders, not study of religions scholars, opened with a series of statements

dressed up as rhetorical questions. Beneath some are rendered as the statements and postulates that they are:

- Religion, one way or the other, has been part and parcel of world history.
- Various religions have been influential factors in the shaping of various histories, societies, and cultures throughout the world.
- In spite of secularization (and of the most general and sweeping *theories* of secularization) religion is still a part of the present world, including Europe.
- In the world — including Europe — a sort of "revival," within well-known religions as well as in the shape of less institutionalized and more individual "religiousness," can, according to several observers, be traced.
- Religion, the notion of religion and discourses of religion, can be seen to function, *inter alia*, today as before, as cultural and national "markers," and means of national, ethnic, cultural, and individual identity.
- This function — however integrating — may also lead to disintegration: the identification of "us" (as Christians, Muslims etc.) implies a differentiation from "them," and crude generalisations and stereotypes of what is called "religion" and "culture," of "ourselves" as well as of "the other," of "their" religion (especially Islam) and of "our" religion, flourish.
- Religion seems also to be a means of counteracting uncertainty and fear, also uncertainty and fear created by e.g. globalisation, including cross-cultural migrations and meetings with other religions and traditions, upheavals of traditional cosmologies, values and norms.
- Such "mechanisms" are at work also in the European context, where some kind of anxiety is felt by the recently settled migrant minority communities (primarily Muslim) as well as by segments of the majority populations.
- No matter to what a degree European countries may be said to be Christian, or influenced by so-called Christian values, and in spite of a constitutional or legal support of one religion as well as current efforts to propagate Christian values and the Christian heritage (not least in the meeting with Muslims and Muslim countries), the European nation states, nevertheless, also identify themselves as secular, pluralistic, democratic; and, one way or the other, they also value rationality, values of the Enlightenment, knowledge founded on science, their non- and even anti-religious heritage, philosophies, worldviews and values.

Following this series of statements I contended, without further ado, that in case the reader agreed, then he was also in agreement with the next series of statements:

- Knowledge of religion and religions, past and present, of meanings and functions to adherents, in European and non-European cultures, in world and European history, is important knowledge.

- Knowledge of religion cannot be separated from knowledge of all that religion has been and is a part of or related to: History of mankind and the world; histories and formations of social groups, societies, cultures, states, and individuals; philosophy and ethics; literature and art (Culture with a capital C); mechanisms and aspects of identity building, of the meeting of cultures, of processes of integration; etc.
- Knowledge of religion then is important if knowledge of all this, as well as knowledge in general, is considered important and to be preferred to lack of knowledge or ignorance.

The conclusion to this (overwhelming) agreement on the fact of religion and the need for and value of knowledge of religion, naturally read:

- A state responsible for education, consequently, must seek to provide the citizens, irrespective of their personal faith and a possible 'state religion', with such knowledge. A qualified education about religion in relation to the above mentioned, and the knowledge and competence generated by that education, including critical and analytical skills, must be a *sine qua non* of general education ("Allgemeinbildung").
- It is, moreover, a must also in regard to providing knowledge and competences instrumental to a skilled performance of a profession (e.g. as businessman, diplomat, politician, policeman, nurse, social worker, journalist, teacher), and it most likely may even be beneficial to the welfare and wellbeing of a society's religious diversity.

To this, of course, I added that such a kind of RE provided by the secular state in the public schools for all pupils and citizens irrespective of a possible state religion and of the possible personal faiths of the pupils and citizens[1] cannot be the same as or a product of a religious and confessional RE. It cannot be religious *instruction* in one or the other religious tradition. To teach *about* religion as a social and historical fact and variable as well as about the various religions and religious phenomena, takes a secular, professional, non-confessional, ir-religious, non-religious or trans-religious approach.

There is, I continued, only one possible academic basis for such RE, and that is the academic study of religions (RS). No matter whether it

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[1] What Alberts 2006, 2007 terms "Integrative religious education." Alberts' ideas, cf. especially "A framework for integrative RE in Europe" (2007:353–87), are similar to mine though there are also interesting differences.

goes under the name "science of religion," "history of religions," "comparative (history of) religions," "Religionsgeschichte" or "Religionswissenschaft," or the like in whatever language, it is this study of religions as it has developed and become institutionalised, first in European universities, later in universities elsewhere, that must serve as the academic basis for the school subject. A study of religions which manifests itself also in national and international communities and learned societies of scholars, communicating with each other on a more or less common ground using a more or less common language. A historical and comparative study of religions which today, though to different degrees, includes kinds of phenomenology, sociology, anthropology, and psychology of religion.

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That was 1996. The manuscript, unfolding the histories and current forms of RE in Denmark in elementary, secondary as well upper-secondary school, and encouraging others to adopt something close to Danish upper-secondary school RE as a model for their RE, was never published. For reasons unknown to me. What it said about the reasons for and the aims of such RE may be seen as banal but no more so than what was and still is being said in several publications, reports and recommendations, including one of the most recent ones, the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

The manuscript, admittedly, was not written after but before 9/11. Neither was it very diplomatic or polite to Council of Europe member states practising a confessional, semi-confessional RE or no RE at all in public schools, nor very open to other kinds of RE pursuing one way or the other more or less explicit (pro-)religious agendas.[2] Though it is not the aim of this article, mainly a piece of normative subject-related didactics, to enter into detailed analyses and discussions with competing views and publications, I shall in passing comment briefly on a few ones.

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[2] For a critical and balanced study of several such kinds of European RE, cf. Alberts 2007. For critical studies of religious agendas in Danish elementary school RE, cf. Jensen 1994, 1996, and 2005b. For general overviews of RE in Europe, cf. *inter alia* Alberts 2006, 2007; Jensen 1999, 2002, 2005a; Schreiner and van Draat 1998; Schreiner 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Willaime 2007.

Even if part of my reasoning and recommendations as of 2008 are not exactly the same as they were in 1996 (as well as earlier and later than that),[3] when it comes to the bottom line, though, I still end up with the same crystal clear conclusion: The states and school authorities may have ideological/religious reasons for *not* having an RS based RE, or no kind of RE at all. They may want to have and support a confessional or semi-confessional RE, or they may want to leave it to the religious communities to instruct the children in the religious traditions of the communities and the parents outside public school. They may, of course, also adopt the idea (cf. also below) that the concept and notion of "religion" as well as a specific science or study of religion is a hindrance to a more scientific way of studying religion, and that religion therefore is best studied and also best taught in or in connection with another science or school subject, e.g. history or social sciences. There are, however, no good *educational* reasons for not making religion education one way or the other part of the normal school curriculum, and I am now as before convinced that the only way that religion can be taught in a professional and controllable manner as well as in a manner that can meet human rights requirements (cf. below) is by way of a separate RS based RE,[4] i.e. a compulsory and normal school subject in line with others like history, literature, German, English, Danish, social science, political science, biology, arts, maths, etc.

If the European states, and these are the states primarily addressed here, want to be "true" not only to their religious heritage and values but also to their non-religious Enlightenment ones, then they must see the logic of the argument and seriously discuss the proposal. If the state or school authorities cannot conceive of religion as well as of RE as a normal subject matter and a normal school subject, totally in line with other such matters and subjects, then it is, as said, because they do not want to (for political, ideological, or religious reasons), or because they cannot. If the latter, this is most likely because they cannot imagine religion and RE from a non-religious perspective and in a non-religious way, rather than because they agree with those who argue (cf. above)

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[3] Cf. publications by Jensen in English and Spanish listed in the references. For publications in Danish cf. the references in Jensen 2005b.

[4] See Cush 2007 for more good arguments in support of RE as a discrete curriculum subject.

that we had better get rid of "religion" and a discrete study of it in discrete departments (and school subjects).

As indicated in the title to this article, I think a RE like the one proposed is a must for a secular state. As a scholar of religion and co-editor of *Secular Theories on Religion* (Jensen and Rothstein 2000) I know that the category and use of "secular" may be as problematic as "religion" — at least if not accompanied by a lengthy definition and discussion. I am not delivering an explicit such definition, either of "religion" or "secular," nor am I entering the discussion whether it would be a service to a scientific study and understanding of religion to do away with the category (as for doing away with RS departments, see below).

As for a "secular state," however, I find D.I. Smith's definition useful:

> The secular state is a state which guarantees individual and corporative freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion. (Smith 1963, Ch. 1)

Measured against this definition, quite a few European states, in terms of constitution and legal system, evidently are not totally secular. If ways of having and not having RE are also considered, this becomes even more evident.

At the same time, though, most of them most likely will think and say that their educational system is based on non-religious Enlightenment principles, and most of them, irrespective of a constitutional link and support to a religion, will boast that they are politically secular. Yet, they obviously have a problem looking at and imagining religion and RE in a secular, i.e. ir-religious, non-religious or trans-religious way. Why do states and school authorities that would never dream of a public school teaching about history, literature or even biology on the basis of a religious worldview and approach make religion and RE an exception to this? In regard to France (and the US) this problematic regarding RE (or the lack thereof) becomes even more ironic.

So, arguing for an RS based RE, I find it tempting to suggest that discussions (and definitions) of the degree to which states are secular include a question whether and to what a degree they have developed a secular RS based RE. Even if this extra criterion will only make it more complicated to define (and find) a "truly" secular state.

Though hopefully clear from what has already been said as well as from what follows, I do not use "secular" as equal to "secularistic" in the meaning of "anti-religious." A secular RS based RE, in theory as in practice will, as I see it, be characterised by the traditional RS methodological atheism, a kind of atheism, as the reader well knows, not to be mistaken for ideological atheism. Besides, the history of RS shows that it may be more likely to pave the way for tolerance towards religions, at times even respect for religions.

Following these digression-like remarks, I proceed to some differences between my present and previous ways of formulating the *why* of RE. I do so first by way of looking back at one aspect of a 1987 article.[5]

The article, taking advantage of a revision of RE in the Danish Gymnasium (upper-secondary school, age 16/17–19/20), was meant as PR for the RS based RE, and it recommended that the public and the politicians applied an RE approach to religion in public debates and that an RS based religion education was introduced also in elementary school. In the article, I referred to the then current historical context and public debates

> on our Danish minority religion, Islam, the critical cultural clashes of immigrants and Danes, the debate on New Religions, the increased awareness of the importance of religions in world politics (Iran, The Middle East, Sri Lanka, India, Latin-America, Poland, etc.) — and the debate on religion education in elementary school (trans. TJ)

arguing that more knowledge of religion and critical analytical skills acquired in an RS based RE was highly needed and much to be preferred to lack of knowledge and prejudice.

Now, any reader of *Numen* can update the 1987 "context" and public debates involving religion, and, when arguing, especially in public, for the value, use and usefulness of RE (as well as of RS), it is indeed hard not to refer to (real or imagined) roles of religion(s) in "clashes of civilisation or cultures," in "integration" and "identity politics," and in regard to "violence and terrorism," etc. The "New Religions" of 1987, most likely, will be left out now that Islam and Muslims are seen as the

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[5] Like the 1996 manuscript also written for a broader public and published in a Danish daily (*Information* 5.10.1987).

number one destabilising factor and threat to normality, and the 1987 reference to religion in politics in Poland, Sri Lanka etc. most likely will be replaced by references to Muslim countries and even non-Muslim ones like e.g. the US, and Denmark. If a few words on "multiculturalism," "citizenship education," "human rights," "interreligious dialogue" — and, of course, 9/11 and maybe the Muhammad cartoons crisis — are added, then the arguments for the *why* and maybe also for the *what* of the "why, what and how" of didactics are almost complete and up-to-date.

Formulating matters in 2008, I prefer, though, to state the issues and prioritise reasons slightly differently: Religion, one way or the other, is and has always been a more or less important part of human life and world history, of social, political and cultural formations and discourses. Scientifically grounded knowledge of humankind, of cultural, social and cognitive constructs and mechanisms, of the history and evolution of man and culture, etc., all imply and necessitate studies and knowledge of what is called religion. Of religion in general, of various religious traditions and phenomena, and of the various ways religion and religions interact with and influence other human, social and cultural formations and discourses.

If science, scientific practice and scientifically grounded knowledge are held to be of value, then scientific approaches to and knowledge of religion and religion related matters must be of value too[6] — and then RE based on the scientific study of religions is equally valuable.

The most important change in my argument compared to 1996, then, has to do not only with the length of it but also with a change of opinion and strategy. In 2008 I am inclined to insist that reasons for a compulsory, scientifically based RE ought be no more and no other than the few and simple ones rendered above.

Discussing the *why* of today's (RS based) RE, then, I want to stress what may be called "core" reasons and aims. I *do* refer to public dis-

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[6] Admittedly (cf. above), there may be scientific and extra-scientific problems related to the category and use of "religion" and to studying it as some "thing" special at special departments for the study of religions instead of as part and parcel of e.g. history and society at history or social science departments. Yet, I contend that decent scientific thinking about religion and "religion" actually has taken place at departments for the study of religions, and as regards the scientific basis of a separate RE, there is no existing alternative to RS and RS departments.

courses on religion as a specific subject-area, and I have no problems *adding* words about the relevance and importance of knowledge of religion and analytical skills in regard to specific contemporary issues and debates. I think, though, that explicit references to the value and usefulness of RE (and RS) in regard to multiculturalism, religious pluralism and diversity, identity, terror, Islam, human rights, tolerance, inter-religious dialogue, 9/11, Muhammad cartoons, should be mentioned only *second* to references to the value and usefulness of knowledge and analytical skills in general.

Nothing more ought to be needed, not even when arguing in public with decision-makers. I think it may be to the advantage of RE as well as of RS, *and* to the success of advocacy thereof, if the possible utility in regard to specific contemporary political-social-cultural contexts, "challenges" or problems is downplayed. At least just a little.[7]

I also think that the knowledge and skills acquired via an RE that is construed on the basis of too prominent and explicit references to its utility in regard to contemporary "challenges" or "epochale Schüsselprobleme" (Klafki) may actually make such an RE *less* useful exactly in that regard.

For one thing, contexts and challenges are changing. Knowledge and skills have to be of such a kind that they can be applied to a wide variety of future contexts and tasks. Very few, if any, of the scholars of religion who actually *do* contribute with valuable and useful knowledge and analyses to contemporary issues, have been *trained* to do so, e.g. by way of going through a study program or an RE explicitly aiming at these contemporary issues — most likely at the cost of other issues or important matters in a study of religions and an RS based RE. Aiming too explicitly (and narrowly) on contemporary issues and the "problem-solving-utility" of RE (and RS) may have severe consequences for the quality of the education *and* for the actual capability to analyse, understand and explain current issues.

Besides: The focus on the often mentioned "challenges" may be said to be based at least sometimes on problematic analyses that put much too

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[7] C.C. Haynes' commentary on S. Prothero in his "Americans don't know much about religion, but does it matter?" (Haynes 2007a) is a good example of how the "challenges" especially after 9/11 enter discussions almost inevitably.

much stress on the role and importance of religion in those "challenges" or conflicts. If RE, like the public at large, also pays such great attention (also as a means of selling itself to the public and the politicians) to the role of religion in the mentioned conflicts, RE risks contributing to blowing the role of religion out of proportions and to downplaying or neglecting the role of e.g. economy, and politics — and of more relevant and effective means to solve the problems than teaching about religion.[8]

Another reason for caution is that many recommendations of "problem-solving-RE" are full of agendas and deal with religion and RE in ways I find hard to reconcile with an RS approach and my ideas about RE. An example is the mentioned *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

One thing is that the RE it recommends is aimed primarily at promoting human rights agendas, democracy, citizenship, and inter-cultural and -religious understanding and communication. Another is, however, that what I consider "pro-religion" or "pro-religious" attitudes and statements regularly pop up. Though stressing that teaching about religion must be based on professional expertise and training (xii–xiii), sound scholarship (xiv) and professional standards (xv; 20), and that it must be accurate, objective (xv–xiv), non-doctrinal, impartial, bias-free (20), it reveals an understanding and attitude to religion that makes exactly such approaches and teaching very difficult — if at all possible: Though RE teachers should have a professional education, their attitudes seem to matter as much (xv); the subject matter has to be treated with respect, and curricula must show sensitivity to the local religious and secular plurality (xv). Most clearly, maybe, does the basic notion of religion and RE show in a sentence like "…since the subject touches upon human nature in a profound way…." (36), and religion as "a personal matter" (33) is described as something that needs a special attitude and strategy on the side of teachers. Teaching about religion constitutes, it is said, a specific "challenge" (31). The otherwise balanced and sober recommendation ends up promoting religion, or rather

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[8] Consequently, when C.C. Haynes (Haynes 2007b) reviews and recommends the *Toledo Guiding Principles* in a commentary entitled "To advance religious freedom, teach about religion," it may be feared that the good will so evidently behind this title and recommendation, as well as the recommended RE, may be used for rather different and contrary purposes.

some postulated kind of religion, and, of course, aspects of religion that may coexist with and be in support of human rights, democracy and pluralism. No wonder that when discussing contents, it is recommended that sources from the religions that support peace, tolerance and human rights are highlighted (21). An impartial RE?

Though of the opinion that intra-scientific values of science are and can be linked with extra-scientific (Enlightenment) values, I also think it can and must be done so that religion does not get a special and extra-scientific treatment in science and schools. Why should what is (called) religion or religious be treated with more respect, in general and in the sciences, than something else? Because of e.g. atrocities past and present committed with reference to religion? Or, because of religionist insiders' postulates that religion is more than human, social, historical? A qualified RE is not the place or vehicle for such respect and privileging of religion. RE can, however, "house," include and qualify related discussions, including discussions of what it takes for "something" to be called "religion" or "religious," and whether this label necessarily demands respect.

Objections to my points of view may refer to the "real" presence of (religious and non-religious) pupils in the RE classroom, arguing that RE didactics and pedagogies of RE, in theory and practice, must take seriously how they (and their parents) think and feel about religion in general, and about their own religion and others' religions.

My reply is "yes," but primarily in so far as RE must meet what according to European and US court rulings as well as UN interpretations are to be seen as standard requirements if RE is compulsory and without opt-out possibilities: The information and knowledge included in the curriculum must be conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.[9]

The RE I propose has no problems meeting these standards, and this is another reason why there is no alternative to RS as its basis. RS based RE is safely based on years of training in approaching religion in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. RS educated teachers are, so to speak, experts in methodological atheism. RE as a compulsory normal

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[9] Cf. Jensen 2002, and 2005a. The *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE/ODIHR 2007) has a useful discussion of this and related matters in Europe and the US (Ch. II, and Appendix III). As for the US, cf. also Haynes 1990 (Part III on religion in the public school curriculum).

school subject is ir-religious, or, if you prefer, trans-religious, and one of its central aims is exactly to teach and learn the pupils to approach religion, also their own, in a trans-religious and secular way. A central aim of RE precisely is to carve out space for such an approach to religion, to teach pupils how religion can be approached in scientific ways, in ways different from religious or anti-religious ideological ways.

Why such an approach should prevent a skilled and decent teacher from behaving in a decent way is beyond my understanding, and (cf. above) an RS based RE, if judged from what has been the case so far, actually may be more conducive to fostering tolerance rather than intolerance towards religion, as well as knowledge and skills that may prove to be helpful in a multi-cultural world. However, I do not think that this ought be the primary aim of RS or RE, even if it may very well be one of many side-effects or side-benefits as well as part of the overall general aims of the public school system.[10]

So, advocating an RS based RE in 2008, I tend to stress the pursuit of scientifically grounded knowledge and the transmission thereof by means, of course, of an age adjusted didactics and pedagogy.

But RS, the academic basis of RE, does not only produce and test theories and knowledge of religion. It also produces and tests the analytical tools, the scientific analytical terms, concepts, and methods, to be apprehended and used by RE teachers and pupils to various degrees. Via diachronic and synchronic comparison (or: phenomenology of religion practised as the systematic part of the study), as well as via historical studies, of the variegated and vast empirical materials, RS has become the most important producer of general categories, concepts and classifications that make a neutral, trans-religious academic study of religion as well as a neutral, trans-religious RE possible — and valuable. This, together with the knowledge produced, must be mentioned first in a series of arguments and aims for an RS based RE.

The reasons for this are many, and I have mentioned some. But there is one more I want to mention, not least in times where dis-

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[10] Modest research on attitudes and opinions on religion and RE among pupils in the Danish Gymnasium indicates that the RE in question actually was conducive to fostering tolerance — at least among those answering the questionnaire. Cf. Andersen *et al.* 2006.

courses on "values" and the use of public school education in general and RE in particular to (re-)inforce "values," not rarely "Christian values," mingle with arguments for the utility and value of RE in regard to "challenges."

Stressing the above may, I think, be most useful when arguing for the value of RE in terms of its contribution to general education ("Allgemeinbildung"). "Bildung," it must be contended, with regard to RE and religion, includes providing and acquiring analytical competences and skills enabling and empowering the pupils, students or citizens to rationally and critically "read," analyse and discuss religious as well as non-religious discourses on religion, to critically reflect on religious practices, knowledge, power structures, means of authorisation and legitimisation of discourses. Knowledge and competences essential to the furthering of an enlightened society and world, and to the furthering of an autonomous and knowledgeable ("mündig") individual and citizen. Emancipatory knowledge, if you like.

A scientifically grounded, impartial, informative, and objective RS based RE, then, transmits exactly such core values. The core values are the scientifically grounded knowledge and analytical critical skills. Nothing less. Stressing this contribution, besides, also might add to the *normalisation* of the subject, since such a *raison d'être* and aim is in perfect line with the general aims of many other normal school subjects.

Beginning the argumentation for the value of RE underlining this, also makes it easier to refer to the utility of RE in regard to the intellectual and maybe practical understanding and handling of contemporary "challenges," as well as to uses of RE in regard to skilled performance of specific professions in a multi-religious society.

I too cannot but hope that a qualified RE may be conducive to rational and professional analyses and handling of certain "challenges." Some knowledge and analytical skills in regard to religion and its possible roles in relation to e.g. integration, identity, (in-)equality, health, the meeting of cultures, conflict and violence may be of help to citizens trying to perform a profession in a competent, rational and skilled way. Politicians, diplomats, soldiers, policemen, judges, businessmen, social workers, doctors, nurses, prison personnel, teachers, all, it may be argued, ought to have a minimum of RE.

Equally evident is the utility of RE for a skilled reading and understanding of Culture with a capital C, be it the literature, architecture or visual arts of the proud French nation or other (almost) equally proud nations or, with a more cosmopolitan "Bildung" in view, world art.[11]

Pointing to the "use" of RE in regard to capable analyses and interpretations of "artistic creations" of mankind, I cannot but add that simply by way of introducing religions and religious sources, RE also introduces "important forms of spiritual life,"[12] what might be seen as "creations," more or less parallel to artistic creations. I mention this for more than one reason. One is that I find it evident. Religion and religious "artefacts" can be looked at, classified and valued in this way. Another reason is that I find it strategically wise not to try to deny that "meetings" in lecture halls and classrooms with various manifestations of religions past and present may function as a means of widening the intellectual, "spiritual" (whatever) "horizon" of the scholar, student, and general audience. One does not have to be a (pro-) religious person, a G. van der Leeuw, M. Eliade or Huston Smith, to say so — and saying so is not equal to considering RS or RE the royal road to religious and cultural salvation. Besides, within the framework of an RS based RE with a balanced variety of "religious creations" on display, such meetings most likely will lead to repulsion as well as fascination.

Advocacy for RE may be better off if it does not silence such an argument out of a (justified) fear that it may be misused to advocate religion. To end this section on a personal note: I guess that if not for a more than "purely" scientific fascination when reading the Homeric epics and the works of scholars like V. Grønbech and M. Eliade, I had never become a scholar of religion. Some religious texts and scholarly works, like some other poetry and literature, may happen to open eyes and bodies for alternative ways of seeing and living. This cannot and ought not to be totally avoided when discussing RE (and RS) and must be kept in mind when discussing RE with those who insist that learning about religions ought include learning *from* religions. It does make

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[11] This is, as far as I understand, what mostly is meant by "religious literacy," a phrase that may be as tricky, though, as "religious education" or "religious studies."

[12] Wording used by the Copenhagen university authorities arguing for the first history of religions chair in 1900; cf. Jensen 2007a.

it easier, I think, to insist that even though RE may well imply that pupils also learn something from the religions taught *about*, it is, nevertheless, *not* the task for school authorities, teachers, to make it an explicit part of the aims nor in other ways to tell the pupils what exactly they are going to learn *from* religion. RE teaching about religions may be one (most likely, though, not the most important) of several factors why some pupils become agnostics, atheists or religionists, etc. In RS based RE, however, it must be left to the pupils themselves what it is, if anything, they learn from the religions they meet and learn about in RE. At least if what is wanted is a separate, compulsory, trans-religious, normal school subject.

Fleshing out an RS Based RE

Though a presentation of reasons for an RS based RE is equal to a presentation of 'core' or primary *aims* as well as secondary aims, this section will have a little more to say on aims. Though some *contents*, the *what* of didactics, follow by necessity from the central reasons and aims, this section, besides taking up a few other didactical-pedagogical issues, primarily fleshes out in a little more detail core contents. I proceed mainly via references to and comments on the RE subject called *Religion* in the Danish Gymnasium as well as the university RS.[13]

The first sentence in the *Guidelines* to the *Executive Order* for *Religion* (as of 2005) reads: "In . . . . *Religion* in the Gymnasium, it goes without saying that teaching takes place on the basis of the science of religion."[14] Though tempting to ask why saying so (and in such a prominent location) if it "goes without saying," and though, as an "insider," I find the statement in need of some modification, it is, nevertheless, a remarkably clear statement — and not that far off the mark.

The *Executive Order* issued by the Ministry of Education states the general aims of the subject as follows:

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[13] Parts of the materials used in this section are more or less identical to materials used in Jensen 2007a, where the interested reader can find a fuller account of the relationship between RE and RS in Denmark.

[14] This as well as the other quotations in the section are translated by TJ. The *Executive Order* and the *Guidelines* (in Danish) can be accessed at http://us.uvm.dk/gymnasie//vejl/.

> Through *Religion*, the pupils acquire knowledge and understanding of religions. They acquire insight in coherences, correspondences as well as conflicts within the various religions, across and between the religions and between religion and society. They gain understanding of their own as well as other's attitudes on the background of religious or secular traditions. They acquire the competences needed to reflect on and act in relation to the challenges presented by religions in a modern national and global context.

Referring to my own statements about core reasons and aims of RE it (almost) goes without saying that I am not entirely happy with this wording. Too many "challenges," too much "understanding" — not least "of. . . . own [and] other's attitudes. . . ." — and why not let "competences" be acquired "simply" for critical analysis and interpretation of religion and discourses on religion, past and present? Why not state the central aims as "qualified and critical acquisition and application of knowledge and theories of religion as well as of methods and methodological issues developed within RS"?

Anyway, it could be worse and it must be added that the aims quoted are supplemented by a paragraph spelling out what is called the objectives of the subject, objectives closely related to the core contents which is described as:

- Christianity, in its global, yet especially European and Danish contexts and manifestations, with readings of texts from the Old as well as the New Testament, as well as from later and contemporary texts.
- Islam, in a global perspective, with inclusion of its European and Danish contexts, with readings of texts from the Qur'an as well as present-day texts.
- a world religion (Buddhism, Hinduism or Judaism).
- the key phenomena of the religions, along with terminology and methods pertaining to the scientific study of religions.

Leaving aside the other parts, it is, of course, the last "bullet" I find comforting. Combined with the more detailed "objectives," stated in terms of what the pupils are supposed to acquire of knowledge and analytical competences to characterise, analyse and contextualise textual sources and other documentary material from a study of religions point of view, the aims, after all, are not too far from mine.

I am also comforted by what is called the subject's 'didactical principles', namely a double approach:

> The religions selected are approached as unique cultural and historical formations, each with their own identity and problematics. On the other hand, religion is approached from a comparative perspective as a cross-cultural phenomenon with general themes and problematics.

And, not least:

> The most important approach to the subject-matter is analyses of texts. The textual source material comprises classical as well as representative texts, to be studied intensively..... The overall approach to the texts must be a combination of descriptive, interpretative and critical approaches, thus paying attention to the self-understanding of the religions and to secular or non-religious and scientific points of view or understanding of the religions.

The importance paid to training competences and skills in analysing and discussing textual sources, applying RS theories and methods, shows also in the rules for the annual exams, where it is exactly these competences that are tested as the pupils are asked to analyse a text not analysed during the teaching.

Though much more, also more critical things, could be said about the current version of *Religion* in the *Executive Order* and *Guidelines*, I now turn to the university RS study programs for coming RE-teachers, and the requirements of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Information as to their qualifications.

To become a teacher in the Gymnasium[15] you need degrees in two relevant university studies. A *Religion* teacher can have RS as a major or a minor[16] as long as the study program comprises the core requirements as defined by the Ministry. These requirements, drafted by a committee in which the RS departments normally have a seat, currently reads:

> The candidate must
>
> – have a solid knowledge of categories and problems pertaining to the phenomenology of religion

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[15] Or the Higher Preparatory Exam, HPE, another youth education where RE is also compulsory.

[16] Candidates with only a minor in the study of religions, however, must complete another 25 ECTS at the university before they are fully qualified to work as teachers.

- master basic theories and methods pertaining to the sociology of religion
- have solid knowledge of texts from the Old as well as the New Testament, and of the formative, historical and contemporary forms of Christianity in a global, including European and Danish, perspective
- have a solid knowledge of texts from the Qur'an, Hadith…. and contemporary texts, and of the formative, historical and contemporary forms of Islam in a global, including European and Danish, perspective
- be familiar with core issues pertaining to philosophy of religion, and have a general knowledge of core issues and main trends in the European debates for and against Christianity and religion from the 18th century until today, including knowledge of non-religious world views and philosophical points of view in regard to ethical issues
- be capable of analysing texts pertaining to the history of religions with regard to an understanding of the individual religions in their historical (social, cultural, political) contexts. In the case of at least one religion, the candidate must be capable of reading the classical texts in the original language and know about textual criticism.

Again, though I and other scholars of religion may not approve of everything, these minimum requirements are not perceived as a problem or straightjacket. They are but a framework, and at the same time not that far from what scholars of religion could have agreed upon as part of the basics.

A description of current study programs at the three Danish universities is out of the question. In what follows I outline the program for the major as it is at my department.[17]

The subject related *competences* to be acquired during the study are similar to the requirements rendered above. The most important differences regard a much greater emphasis on knowledge of the history of the study of religions and of contemporary theories and methodological issues. The core elements are:

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[17] A minor amounts to 95 ECTS (1.5 years), with 45 ECTS at the bachelor and 50 at the "candidate" (graduate) level. The major amounts to 205 ECTS (3.5 years), 135 at the bachelor- and 70 at the candidate level. On top of this, a maximum of 30 ECTS (six months) is reserved for apprehending the basics of a relevant language. It is thus not only the students who pursue an academic career, but also the *Religion* teacher who must be capable of reading texts from at least one religion in its original language.

A. Bachelor's level:

1. Comparative Religion 1 (25 ECTS): religions of illiterate peoples; phenomenology of religion 1; Islam; hinduism or Buddhism.
2. Comparative Religion 2 (25 ECTS): history of the study of religions; phenomenology of religion 2 and readings of texts from the history of religions; religious innovation, with special regard to the present, plus relevant theory and method.
3. Religion in the Old Testament and Judaism (5 ECTS).
4. Christianity (25 ECTS): the origins and early history, Middle Ages and Reformation, modern and present day Christianity, globally, in Europe and in Denmark; specific themes pertaining to contemporary Christianity.
5. Religion-related Philosophy (25 ECTS): the history of Western philosophy; ethics and political philosophy; philosophy of religion and religion-related philosophy of science.
6. Electives in Comparative Religion (10 ECTS).
7. BA-project (15 ECTS) (any subject within the study of a religions programme as defined by the above subject areas).

B. Candidate level

1. Subject related to a specific language (10 ECTS)
2. Religion and religion-related topics in Europe, past or present (10 ECTS)
3. Religion and religion-related topics outside Europe, past or present (10 ECTS)
4. Religion and Communication (10 ECTS)
5. Master's Thesis (30 ECTS) (any subject within the study of religions program as defined by the above mentioned subject areas).

"Religion and Communication," earlier "*Religion*-related didactics," used to serve only students who intended to become *Religion* teachers. Today, though still comprising this, it includes theory and practice of communicating, representing or presenting knowledge of religion in various electronic and printed media, in public debates, etc.

Christianity still "stands out" as if something special not included in "Comparative Religion," and the religion that takes up most time.[18] In this it matches what is the case in the school subject. There are several less good reasons for this special treatment, but also some good ones. It is the largest religion in the world and no doubt the most influential

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[18] For the special status of this religion at the departments for the study of religions in Denmark, cf. Jensen 2001.

and powerful, not only in Europe and Denmark but also in the US, Latin America and probably also in Africa. Besides, this religion has had a dominant influence on the study of religions and it is still influencing the students' thinking about religion. Therefore, it is logical that more time is devoted to Christianity than the other religions in a study program such as this, and it must be considered a major progress that much of the time teaching Christianity nowadays is used teaching about different kinds of Christianity and teaching about Christianity in a normal study of religions way.[19]

As for "religion-related philosophy," this element has slowly emancipated itself from a theological-philosophical approach. Focus now is on political philosophy relevant also to contemporary public discussions, and on the thinking about religion of important European philosophers. Part of this is reflected in the requirements from the Ministry quoted above, and it is a little bit strange that religion-related philosophy has become marginalised in the current *Executive Order* for *Religion*. But, cf. below, it is most likely because teaching about Islam has become obligatory.

<p align="center">*</p>

The RS based RE I advocate is not significantly different from the Danish model, even if improvements can be imagined, of course. Let me, however, add a few remarks regarding various issues.

As can be seen from the quoted curricula, teaching about Islam has now become obligatory in *Religion*, and in Odense Islam also has been allotted more time. Good reasons can be given for this, but it does, of course, create problems. Given that one of the guiding principles for a selection of core contents, is the size, spread and impact of religions as well as the degree to which they are seen as important in regard to what is considered central cultural and political issues in today's world, Islam must be dealt with in more detail, not least if you want to teach more about this religion than what may be related to headscarves, circumci-

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[19] In Odense, a historian and a sociologist of religion, both specialised in aspects of Christianity, have taken over the positions traditionally held by theologians. As I see it, it is, at least in Odense, but a matter of a few years before this religion is classified under "Comparative Religion."

sion, gender and terror. But more time to Islam is less time to every-thing else, for instance to all those other religions past and present, the study of which makes it possible for a religion scholar to treat Islam (as well as Christianity) as a religion next to other such.

Besides, while teaching about Hinduism or Buddhism (or Judaism) is required, the tendency is to pay less attention to these religions. With the focus on contemporary issues, including European and Danish forms of Islam, the risk is that Europe, "we," RS and RE (once again) become provincial, and that students do not "meet" a sufficient number of religions, including so-called illiterate peoples' religions, until 2005 part of the core contents also of RE. Introductions to more religions, not least religions of the past, are a strong desideratum, especially in times where the public and political focus is on contemporary religion, including the contemporary plurality of religions.[20] Also with regard, as indicated above, to the utility of RS and RE. It is a prerequisite for exactly that distanced, historical, comparative 'relation' to, analysis and understanding of religion in general as well as of current religious affairs which is so sorely needed — and which pupils, religious or not, their parents, society, and the media cannot provide for themselves.

As for questions on the "representation" of the religions in RE, I agree that there is a need to find ways, in classroom teaching, via the textual sources and the textbooks used, to deconstruct and de-reify reli-gion and religions. The very question about the concept and notion of religion as well as of representation must be made part of the core cur-riculum. An RS based RE must find ways to share these key didactic and methodological issues with the pupils, regardless of their age.

Talking about "big questions," I find it essential to a quality RE and the up-dating of an RS based RE that the famous so-called "existential" big questions, by some even held to be the essence of religions — and of RE — be deconstructed and if not totally abandoned at least sup-plemented by another series of big questions: Why is "there" religion in the first place? Why is it still here? What functions may it serve? These are questions that cannot be raised in today's RE if the teacher does not find ways of introducing also recent efforts to answer them, e.g. with

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[20] Cf. Jensen 2003 for a discussion of this and recent developments in RS in Den-mark.

reference to biology, evolution and cognition. RE teachers and RS scholars must help each other to find ways to tailor such complicated matters to the various age groups.

An intensified teaching about the concept and notion of religion and the big questions is central to one of the key tasks of an RS based RE, what I have termed "de-familiarizing religion" (Jensen 1997, 1999), something as important as making pupils familiar with religion(s). Most pupils, religious or not, have notions of religions influenced by religions and by public discourse on religion. They are in this way quite often all too familiar with religion(s). De-familiarizing religion is therefore part of the job of RE, and relating questions about religion to biology, ecology, evolution and cognition may be helpful also in that regard. Besides, it may help pave the way for more and new kinds of interest in RE and religion.

Fundamental to teaching about the concept, notion, and representation of religion, of course, is the teaching not only about the different scientific approaches to religion but also about the different approaches to religion in education, in RE. Aspects of the didactics of RS based RE must be an integral part of the subject. Not just because it is part of the teaching about religion, and because a scientific approach must always question itself, e.g. by way of a critical elucidation of its history and genealogy, *and* by way of discussions of alternative ways of teaching and studying religions. No, it must be an integral part also to prevent that an RS based RE approach to religion may be accused by opponents for constituting yet another hegemonic "discourse," no longer capable of meeting the mentioned requirements to a compulsory school subject.

In light of what has just been said about the need to make notions of religion, and ways of studying and teaching religion a central part of RE, it once again is evident that it will be hard to find any other academic basis than RS for this kind of RE. Only at the departments specialising in various kinds of "naturalistic" approaches to religion can you find the desired (congenial) descriptions, balanced interpretations and critical explanations, as well as the open-ended, non-normative definitions and theories of religion suited for an open, democratic and secular society and the public school. This is where you find those critical and self-reflective approaches upon which a compulsory RE must be based.

Besides the fundamental training of methodical, critical reading of different kinds of texts and other materials, time must be found also for some teaching about field work methods, not least if visits to religious institutions are part of the teaching.

As for the element "religion-related philosophy," no longer part of the core contents of *Religion* though part of the quoted standard requirements for RE teachers and also of the RS study program, I want to add but this: A critical teaching about the RS based RE approach includes teaching, one way or the other, about the genealogy and history of the study of religions. Western philosophical traditions, including philosophers' views of religion, are part and parcel thereof. Furthermore, since the teaching about religions past and present cannot escape touching upon general characteristics of a religious ethics as well as religious "answers" to contemporary discussions pertaining to what is called ethics, teaching about non-religious, philosophical ethics is very useful. Besides, this very element of RE is an important means to a balanced teaching about past and present European values and attitudes to religion. They are not and never have been just Christian or otherwise religious. Another reason, of course, for including this subject-area in RE is to make it more difficult for those who propagate it as an alternative to RE.

So much for curriculum contents. Who, then, is going to construe and decide the contents of an RS based RE? In my opinion the optimal way, with a view to RE as a normal and qualified school subject, is for a Ministry of Education or the school authorities in charge to delegate the drafting of it to professional experts, RE teachers and RS scholars. I am, needless to say, not in favour of — in the name of multiculturalism or anything else — involving "representatives" from local or national religious groups,[21] parents or other amateurs, sometimes termed "stakeholders."[22]

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[21] As is the case in e.g. England.

[22] E.g. in the *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

Epilogue

At the beginning of this article, I referred to a recommendation from a Council of Europe seminar on "Studying religion in social sciences at school" (Palmer 1995). Recommending the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, Haynes (2007b) admits that he has been involved in that report. I have to admit that I was there, at the Council of Europe seminar, and that may be one reason why I prefer that recommendation to that of the *Toledo Guiding Principles*. I quote it time and again:

> ….we…. recommend that each country should have formal professional time-tabled non-confessional Religious Education…. By "Religious Education" we mean teaching about the diversity of faiths and diversity within faiths; about core teachings and local variations; about key beliefs and cultural manifestations of religion. It should include sensitivity to beliefs but also a critical edge. It should also ensure space for proper handling of issues related to minority groups — both minority faiths and minorities within faiths …..To implement this (viz "….the teaching of religions as cultural and social facts and value bases, the analysis and understanding of which is necessary for an understanding of the past, present and future") we suggest that experience and modules developed in Religious Studies Departments and/ or History of Religion in Universities be shared with those responsible for teacher training and thus for the development of formal Religious Education….

This document, contrary to the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, leaves no doubt as to its preference for RE as a separate RS based school subject. I am certain that the main reason the teachers present recommended the RS departments to be the basis for the RE recommended was that they had no doubt that this was the only thing to do if the RE they envisioned could be taught in a professional way. However, I also think that it is possible that my presence at the seminar and my efforts to influence the recommendations may have played an ever so modest role.

This brings me to my final remarks. According to the Danish University Act of 2003, it is part of the job of university scholars to "share knowledge" with society at large. There are many ways of sharing, and some scholars have been busy sharing for years, writing books on religion for a wider public, writing articles to dailies and magazines on religion related issues, giving interviews and functioning as expert-scholars to the media, and giving lectures on religion to the police, soldiers, businessmen, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers etc. Some

scholars, e.g. in Germany, have come together to serve the wider society via a platform like REMID, and some scholars, e.g. in Denmark, once established their own private consultancy. Sometimes serving the wider community has become a part of the services of the "learned societies," like the national associations for the study of religions, providing the media with lists of scholars specialised in this or that.

Applying RS to the education of RE teachers, writing textbooks to be used in RE, arranging in-service training, being engaged in drafting the curriculum and being engaged in the development of an RS based RE is another way of sharing knowledge. In Denmark this has been the business of the departments and many religion scholars for more than 25 years, and the beginnings of the close relationships can be traced back to 1912. As I have written elsewhere in more detail about this (Jensen 2007a), suffice it to say that I am in total agreement with Armin W. Geertz (unpublished manuscript) who comments upon the linking of the then *Christian Studies* study programs to the History of Religions chair in Copenhagen in 1912 by saying that this became "one of the most significant factors in the economic and institutional success of the study of religions in Denmark."

What I want to add is that there can be no doubt either that the academic study of religions has been one of the most significant factors in the success of *Religion*. A success that shows, e.g., in the fact that *Religion* in 2005 entered the exclusive "class" of subjects taught not only at an obligatory C-level but also at the B-level as an elective. At this level, *Religion* is taught for some 120 60-minute lectures (on top of the obligatory 75).

While sharing knowledge by way of "going public" may, as D. Wiebe has warned time and again and as the present author has learnt in the wake of the Muhammad cartoons, be a risky business and even put the credibility of the study of religions at risk,[23] sharing by way of RE certainly is less risky. It has been interesting to see how RE has been put on the agendas of recent IAHR[24] and EASR conferences, and it is equally interesting that an issue of NUMEN is devoted to discussions about RE and RS. Hopefully more scholars discover RE as an interesting field or subject-matter for the study of religions, and hopefully some scholars

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[23] Cf. Wiebe 2000, 2005; Jensen 2007b, 2008.
[24] Cf. Pye, Franke et al. 2006.

can see engagement in RE as a possible and appropriate way of promoting the academic study of religions and carving out more space for a study of religions approach to religion in the public sphere.

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Teaching about Religions in the Public Sphere: European Policy Initiatives and the Interpretive Approach[1]

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Abstract

This paper charts a policy shift within international and European inter-governmental institutions towards advocating the study of religions (or the study of religions and beliefs) in European publicly funded schools. The events of September 11, 2001 in the USA acted as a "wake up call" in relation to recognising the legitimacy and importance of the study of religions in public education. For example, policy recommendations from the Council of Europe and guiding principles for the study of religions and beliefs from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe have been developed and are under consideration by member or participating states of both bodies. In translating policy into practice, appropriate pedagogies need to be adopted or developed. The paper uses the example of the interpretive approach to indicate how issues of representation, interpretation and reflexivity might be addressed in studying religious diversity within contemporary societies in ways which both avoid stereotyping and engage students' interest.

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[1] This article is based on the author's keynote lecture at the European Association for the Study of Religions conference, held in Bremen, September 2007.

Introduction

The study of religions as part of public education has become a "hot topic" in recent times across Europe and on the wider international scene. This is partly due to the global attention given to religion as a result of the events of September 11, 2001 in the USA, their causes, on-going consequences and associated incidents that have affected people in many parts of the world. However, arguments for policy changes encouraging the study of religious diversity in public education were being advanced well before 9/11. In one international institution, the Council of Europe, the shift from argument to policy development was held back by a reluctance to address a complex and controversial area reflected in different histories of religion and state within member countries and by a reluctance to acknowledge issues concerning religion as a mode of discourse within the public sphere. As noted in a Council of Europe document, the attacks on the World Trade Centre and other targets in September 2001, acted as a "wake up call," bringing the issues directly to the attention of influential international bodies and precipitating action at the level of public policy (Council of Europe 2002).

I will note the initiatives taken by key international bodies, namely the United Nations (including UNESCO), the European Union (and European Commission), the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in encouraging the development of studies about religions (and beliefs) in public education. The main impetus for these initiatives lies in a combination of expressing respect for human rights in the public sphere (through the development of tolerance and respect for freedom of religion or belief, for example) and in fostering social cohesion through combating ignorance and developing understanding and tolerance for difference. Next I will give a sketch of current provision in Europe in relation to "religious education" (understood in some rather different ways in different national systems of education), noting some tensions between certain concepts of religious education and "teaching about religions." Then I will consider issues of pedagogy, using the interpretive approach as an example of a pedagogy for what has been variously called "teaching about religions and beliefs" (OSCE 2007), "the religious dimension of intercultural education" (Council of Europe 2004b), "open and impartial religious education" (Jackson 1997), "religion education" (Chidester

2006) and "integrative religious education" (Alberts 2006, 2007). In this overview of the interpretive approach, I will draw attention to some issues relating to the application of the reflexive element of the approach in some European societies.

The United Nations and UNESCO

The United Nations (UN) is a global association of governments whose stated aims are to facilitate co-operation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress and human rights issues.[2] In 2001, before the events of September 11, the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination was held under the auspices of the then United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Mr. Abdelfattah Amor. The Final Document of the Conference took the view that education, especially school education, should contribute to promoting tolerance and respect for freedom of religion or belief. Its recommendations included the strengthening of a non-discriminatory perspective in education and of knowledge in relation to freedom of religion or belief.[3] The document influenced a number of initiatives, including the work of the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief through its programme on Teaching for Tolerance (e.g. Jackson and McKenna 2005; Kaymakcan and Leirvik 2007; Larsen and Plesner 2002).[4]

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)[5] has been involved in human rights and inter-cultural education over a long period. In 1974, UNESCO's General Conference adopted Recommendations Concerning Education for International

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[2] http://www.un.org/ (accessed 4 September 2007).

[3] Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, Commission on Human Rights, Report by Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Executive summary, 14 March 2002, E/CN.4/2002/73. See also Larsen and Plesner 2002:12–13.

[4] http://www.oslocoalition.org/t4t.php (accessed 22 November 2007).

[5] UNESCO's remit is to encourage international peace and universal respect by promoting collaboration among nations (www.unesco.org) (accessed 4 September 2007).

Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that have shaped its work in this area.[6] The Dakar Framework for Action 2000–2015 is the basis of UNESCO's priorities, and refers directly to the role of schools in promoting understanding among religious groups, emphasising the importance of governmental institutions in developing partnerships with religious groups in educational contexts.[7] Also, UNESCO's Inter-religious Dialogue Programme aims to promote understanding between religions or beliefs and supports education in the field of inter-religious dialogue through the publication of pedagogical material.

To return to the UN more broadly, in 2005 the UN Secretary-General launched an initiative, co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, for an "Alliance of Civilizations" to respond to Huntington's idea of a clash of civilizations. He established a high level group of distinguished people with the task of producing practical recommendations to counter the "clash of civilizations" view. The report, (presented in November 2006), includes the recommendation that "Education systems, including religious schools, must provide students with a mutual respect and understanding for the diverse religious beliefs, practices and cultures in the world."[8] This takes the view that ignorance is often a cause of hostility towards religions, and that educational materials should be developed reflecting a consensus view. This recommendation influenced the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's decision to develop guiding principles on teaching about religions and beliefs for use in its participating states (see below).

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[6] Recommendations Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974), http://www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdf/Peace_e.pdf (accessed 2 September 2007).

[7] The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments, adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf (accessed 2 September 2007).

[8] Report of the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations, 13 November 2006, Chapter VI, para. 6.8, available at http://www.unaoc.org/repository/HLG_Report.pdf (accessed 2 September 2007).

European Union (EU) and European Commission (EC)

In 2005, the Council of the European Union (heads of state and the President of the European Commission) adopted a resolution on the response of educational systems to racism and xenophobia which emphasises the value of using teaching materials that reflect Europe's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.[9]

The former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), published a number of reports on racism and xenophobia in the EU, which included recommendations on promoting inter-religious dialogue, including through education.[10]

Perhaps the most important recent initiative offered by the EC is its support for research in the field of religions and education. Through the Framework 6 programme, the EC has sponsored research into varieties of teaching about religions or beliefs that promote dialogue and address conflict. The project is entitled "Religion in Education: A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European Countries?" (REDCo). The research proposal was submitted as part of the EU Framework 6: "Citizens and governance in a knowledge based society" research field, under Research Priority Area 7: "New forms of citizenship and cultural identities." The Project was designed to contribute to section 7.2.1., "Values and religions in Europe."

The project's main aim is to establish and compare the potentials and limitations of religion in the educational fields of selected European countries and regions. It brings together scholars from nine universities in Germany (2), England, Norway, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Estonia and the Russian Federation. The project aims to identify approaches and policies that can contribute to making religion in education a factor promoting dialogue in the context of European development. Its work includes a series of discrete national studies, European

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[9] Response of Educational Systems to the Problem of Racism, Resolution of the Council [of the European Union], 23 October 1995, Official Journal C 312 of 23.11.1995, available at http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10413.htm (accessed 4 September 2007).

[10] See, for instance, the report EUMC, Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia, (EUMC, Vienna, December 2006), http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations_EN.pdf (accessed 4 September 2007).

overviews (Jackson et al. 2007), cross-European studies (including qualitative and quantitative studies of adolescents' attitudes towards the study of religions in schools) and comparative studies. The Project began its work in March 2006 and is scheduled to end in February 2009.[11] As well as being of value in its own right, the project is likely to provide a platform for future European research in the field of religions and education.

Council of Europe (CoE)[12]

The values of freedom of religion or belief and education for tolerance are embedded in Council of Europe documents, such as article nine of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms[13] and article twelve of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.[14] However, it is only post 9/11 that the Council of Europe has become directly involved in developing ideas for handling religion in the context of public education. Two main initiatives have been taken, one within the Directorate IV (Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport) and its work on intercultural education, and the other through the auspices of the then Commissioner for Human Rights.

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[11] http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html (accessed 4 September 2007).

[12] The Council is an inter-governmental organisation founded in 1949 and based in Strasbourg, France. It comprises 47 member states currently and its aims include protecting human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law and seeking solutions to problems such as discrimination against minorities, xenophobia and intolerance (Council of Europe 2004a). The Council's work leads to European conventions and agreements in the light of which member states may amend their own legislation. The key political bodies of the Council are the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and various specialist conferences of Ministers.

[13] The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, available at http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm (accessed 4 September 2007).

[14] Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, available at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_(monitoring)/1._texts/PDF_H(1995)010%20E%20FCNM%20and%20Explanatory%20 Report.pdf (accessed 4 September 2007).

The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education

Within the Council of Europe, a view of intercultural education has gradually emerged, concerned with developing competences and attitudes enabling individuals to respect the rights of others, developing skills of critical empathy and fostering dialogue with others from different backgrounds (Council of Europe 2002). This approach was developed in projects in subjects such as history and education for democratic citizenship but did not include attention to religion. Religion was avoided because of the different relationships between religion and state across Europe, because of the diversity of current arrangements in member states on the place of religion in schools (reflecting histories involving religious conflict) and especially because, as a public body, the Council has to maintain neutrality with regard to the expression of views on religions.

However, at the political level, the atrocities of September 11, 2001 triggered a shift in policy. Through the Committee of Ministers, the Council of Europe formulated its response to include safeguarding fundamental values and investing in democracy. In relation to the latter, the then Secretary General, Walter Schwimmer, affirmed that intercultural and interfaith dialogue would become a key theme for the Council, proposing:

> …action to promote a better understanding between cultural and/or religious communities through school education, on the basis of shared principles of ethics and democratic citizenship. (Council of Europe 2002)

9/11 is thus a symbol for the study of religion to emerge as a new priority for European public policy on education. This priority was, in effect, an extension of previous efforts to combat racism and promote democratic citizenship within the Council agreed at the Vienna Summit in 1993.[15] However, the Council had "… no overall intercultural concept, strategy or recent normative text capable of easy extension specifically to cover religious diversity as well," recognising that "existing activities

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[15] http://www.coe.int/T/e/human_rights/ecri/5-Archives/2-Other_texts/2-Vienna_Summit/Declaration/Declaration_Vienna_Summit.asp (accessed 15 May 2006).

do not deal with issues of religion in education," and concluding that "a new activity is required; and the importance and complexity of the subject indicate making it a full-scale project" (Council of Europe 2002).

In early 2002, the Council set up a working party to examine the issues, prior to the establishment of a project suggesting methods and approaches for integrating the study of religion into intercultural education in the public domain. The key condition for including religion as a cross-European topic in education was that, despite different views on religion at the personal and societal levels, all could agree that religion is a "cultural fact" and that knowledge and understanding of religion at this level is highly relevant to good community and personal relations and is therefore a legitimate concern of public policy. This was not an attempt to *reduce* religion to culture, but a recognition that the presence of religions in society was the lowest common denominator with which all European states could work in an educational context.

The Working Party's proposals, following discussion at a forum on intercultural education, religious diversity and dialogue in Strasbourg in September 2002, were adopted in modified form by the Committee of Ministers. European experts in religious and intercultural education met in Paris in June 2003 to identify the key issues in relation to religious diversity and intercultural education, to examine their implications for pedagogy and to make policy recommendations for the Education Ministers' conference on intercultural education to be held in Athens in November 2003. At this workshop there was an initial suspicion by some of the intercultural educators of the aims of specialists in religious education. It became clear that, as a result of their academic specialisation and national focus, many in each field were ignorant of the work of the others; there was especially an ignorance of work done on open and impartial approaches to the study of religions in schools. Once intercultural educators became aware of the range of ideas that had been developed in presenting religions impartially, a genuine dialogue was established, and fruitful collaborative work followed.

In relation to policy, the view was taken that, whatever any particular state's system of religious education, children should have education about religious and secular diversity as part of their intercultural education. The 2003 Athens Conference of the European Ministers of Edu-

cation endorsed the project.[16] Issues related to the project were discussed at a high profile conference for educational decision-makers, professionals and representatives of civil society, held in Oslo in June 2004 (Council of Europe 2004b).

The Council then appointed a group of specialists in religious and intercultural education to collaborate in producing a reference book for educators, administrators and policy makers to deal with the issue of religious diversity — theoretical perspectives, key concepts, pedagogies and wider questions of religious diversity in schools, including school governance and management in Europe's schools (Keast 2007).

The Steering Committee for Education also submitted a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on the management of religious diversity in schools, based on the project's approach. The draft Ministerial recommendation's aim[17] is to ensure that governments take into account the religious dimension of intercultural education at the levels of *education policy*, in the form of clear education principles and objectives, *institutions*, especially through open learning settings and inclusive policies, and *professional development of teaching-staff*, through the provision of adequate training.

The recommendation provides a set of principles that can be used by all 47 member states. These include the following:

• agreement that religion is at least a "cultural fact" that contributes, along with other elements such as language and historical and cultural traditions, to social and individual life;
• information on and knowledge of religions and philosophies fall within the public sphere and should be taught in order to develop tolerance as well as mutual understanding and trust;
• religious or philosophical conceptions of the world and beliefs develop on the basis of individual learning and experience, and should not be entirely predefined by one's family or community;

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[16] For more detailed information see the webpage entitled The Europe of Cultural Co-operation, available at http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/education/intercultural_education/overview.asp (accessed 4 September 2007).
[17] At the time of writing (October 2007) the draft recommendation is awaiting approval by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

- an integrated approach to religious, moral and civic values should be encouraged in education;
- intercultural dialogue and its religious dimension are an essential precondition for the development of tolerance and a culture of "living together." (Council of Europe 2007)

The document recommends that the governments of member states should draw on the principles in their current or future educational reforms, in order to promote tolerance and the development of a culture of "living together," and should bring these to the attention of relevant public and private bodies.[18]

Proposal for a European Centre

A second initiative made within the Council of Europe was prompted by the then Commissioner for human rights, Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, who set up a series of annual meetings, including representatives of religions in Europe, academics and politicians from member states to discuss the role of religious bodies in promoting human rights and addressing social issues. These seminars began in 2000, turning their attention to religious education at the meetings in Malta (2004) and Kazan in the Russian Federation (2006).

The Maltese consultation discussed the possibility of establishing a basic programme for teaching about religions in all member states, and considered the establishment of a European Centre for Religious Education focusing on human rights (McGrady 2006). The recommendations of the Maltese seminar were considered by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2005,[19] which made recommendations to the Committee of Ministers, including the provision of generic, adaptable study modules for primary and secondary schools, of initial and in-service teacher

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[18] The draft policy recommendation and the project book were discussed at the first of 3 regional debates organised by the Council of Europe (held in Athens, 8–9 October, 2007) designed to consider the implications of the project recommendations for policy development in particular states.

[19] http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/EREC1720.htm (accessed 4 September 2007).

training in religious studies, and the establishment of a European teacher training institute for the comparative study of religions. All of this was to be done with the objective of promoting understanding, not instilling faith (sections 13–14).[20] The 2006 seminar, held at Kazan in the Russian Federation (22–23 February), took the discussion further.[21]

The 2005 recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly were discussed by the Committee of Ministers on May 24th 2006. The Ministers welcomed the recommendations in principle, but set them in the context of various policy statements on developing intercultural dialogue (within and beyond Europe), including the religious dimension. Attention was drawn to the Council's project on the intercultural education and religious diversity (see above), especially to its reference book (Keast 2007), which encourages impartiality, open mindedness and a critical approach.

Although not stated explicitly, the Committee of Ministers considered that the recommendations from the Parliamentary Assembly, relating only to teaching about religions, were too narrow in relation to the establishment of a European Centre. The Chair of the Education Steering Committee reiterated the Committee's interest in setting up a network, centre or "pôle" of excellence for the training of education staff in the Council of Europe's fields of competence, such as education for democratic citizenship and human rights and intercultural education, noting that training for teachers on education about religion could be featured as part of the Centre's programme.[22]

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[20] Parliamentary Assembly, 4 October 2005 Recommendation 1720 (2005) http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/EREC1720.htm (accessed 9 June 2006.

[21] The conclusion to the seminar report states that: "In the majority of Council of Europe member states the new generations do not even receive an education in their own religious heritage, much less that of others. For this reason, it had previously been suggested to establish an Institute capable of contributing to the development of teaching programmes, methods and materials in the member states. At the same time this Institute would serve as a research centre on these matters. It should also be a training centre for instructors, a meeting place and a forum for dialogue and exchange. Course content should be defined in close collaboration with representatives of the different religions traditionally present in Europe" (Anon. 2006).

[22] http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc06/EDOC10944.htm (accessed 13 June 2006).

A feasibility study was commissioned, which recommended the establishment of such an interdisciplinary Centre.[23] Subsequently, a major international conference on "Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-Faith Co-operation" (the Volga Forum) included in its final declaration a statement expressing the participants' support for the project "aiming at setting up, in the framework of the Council of Europe, a pôle of excellence on human rights and democratic citizenship education, taking into account the religious dimension."[24] At the time of writing, discussions are proceeding on establishing an interdisciplinary centre, with support and funding from the Norwegian authorities. It is hoped that the Centre could begin its work some time in 2008, which is the Year for Intercultural Dialogue of the European Union. It is envisaged that the centre would deal with research, information sharing and with the training of educators.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (formerly the Helsinki process) has 56 participant states, including most European states plus the USA and Canada. It is engaged in setting standards in fields including military security, economic and environmental co-operation, conflict resolution and human rights issues. In relation to human rights, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) works in the areas of election observation, democratic development, human rights (including the right to freedom of religion or belief), tolerance and non-discrimination, and law. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is there-

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[23] The present author was commissioned to undertake the study, which was presented to the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education on October 19, 2006.

[24] The conference was held in Nizhniy Novgorod in the Russian Federation, September 7–9, 2006, under the auspices of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, the Inter-Faith Council of Russia and the Council of Europe. The quotation is from the "Volga Forum Declaration," Final Document of the International Conference "Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-Faith Cooperation," paragraph 4 (http://www.strasbourg-reor.org/modules.php?name=News&new_topic=42&file=art icle&sid=352; http://www.coe.int/T/DC/Press/news/20060908_declaration_volga_ en.asp [both accessed 12 October 2006]).

fore well placed to play a role in facilitating dialogue and understanding between different religions and beliefs and in making educational policy recommendations.

The group brought together to produce the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OSCE 2007) includes members of the ODIHR's Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.[25] These include authorities on international law (with experience in dealing with legal questions related to the exercise of religious freedom), education and the social sciences. Additional experts in the fields of religion, education and pedagogy were brought in to assist in the preparation of the guidelines. The group as a whole reflects a range of different religious and non-religious positions, helping to ensure that the perspective of different religious and belief communities is taken into account and that the guiding principles are balanced and inclusive. The *Toledo Guiding Principles*, launched in Madrid on November 28, 2007, includes chapters on the human rights framework and teaching about religions and beliefs, preparing curricula, teacher education and respecting rights in the process of implementing courses in teaching about religions and beliefs.

The rationale for the Toledo Guiding Principles is as follows:

> The Toledo Guiding Principles have been prepared in order to contribute to an improved understanding of the world's increasing religious diversity and the growing presence of religion in the public sphere. Their rationale is based on two core principles: first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for *everyone's* right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes.
>
> The primary purpose of the Toledo Guiding Principles is to assist OSCE participating States whenever they choose to promote the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, particularly as a tool to enhance religious freedom. The Principles focus solely on the educational approach that seeks to provide teaching *about* different religions and beliefs as distinguished from instruction in a specific religion or belief. They also aim to offer criteria that should be considered when and wherever teaching about religions and beliefs takes place. (OSCE 2007:11–12)

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[25] The connection with Toledo comes from the fact that the first drafting meeting took place in May 2007 in Toledo and from that city's historic association with religious tolerance.

Religious Education in Europe: The Present Picture

We have seen then that there is a very strong impetus, derived from inter-governmental bodies such as the UN, the Council of Europe, the EC and the OSCE, for European states to initiate policies introducing "teaching about religions (and beliefs)" in European schools. In linking possible new policy initiatives to current practice and future developments, we need to review the range of policies to the study of religions to be found in different European states. Such a review shows that the role of religion in education has been seen rather differently in the various European states (Kodelja and Bassler 2004; Kuyk et al. 2007; Schreiner 2002; Willaime and Mathieu 2005). On the basis of these sources one might make some points about the diversity of policy in Europe from different perspectives. One might, for example, distinguish between the different ways in which states accommodate religion within their educational systems and develop policy accordingly. There are "confessional" systems in which religious bodies have responsibility for religious education. For example, in Germany, the churches have a supervisory responsibility for religious education, but within a constitutional framework of equal rights and non-discrimination. The "confessional" system is different in the Netherlands, where schools can teach the religion of the sponsor, and different again from, say, Slovakia, where schools teach what is recognised as the religion of the state. In some instances, as in Poland, religious education is an optional subject, taught by insiders, according to the tenets of particular denominations (mainly Roman Catholicism). Teachers' qualifications are defined by the church in question, in agreement with the Ministry of National Education and Sport (Eurydice 2006). Then, there are non-confessional systems where religious bodies have no role in public education. For example, in public education in France, there is no subject devoted specifically to the study of religion, and any teaching covering religion in subjects such as history, French or philosophy must be purely informational (Estivalèzes 2005, 2006). Sweden offers another example of non-confessional religious education, with no direct involvement from religious bodies, but where the subject is seen (in contrast to France) as closely related to the personal development of young people (Larsson 2000). There are also "mixed" systems, as in England and Wales, where

the majority fully publicly funded schools have an impartial form of religious education, while mainly state-funded voluntary aided schools may teach the religion of the sponsoring body (Jackson 2007; Jackson and O'Grady 2007).

A distinction is sometimes made between educating into, about and from religion (Hull 2002). Educating *into* religion occurs when a single religious tradition is taught by "insiders," often with the objective of socialising pupils in the religion or strengthening their commitment to it. Educating *about* religion, in contrast, uses descriptive and historical methods, aiming neither to promote nor to erode religious belief. Educating *from* religion involves pupils in considering different responses to religious and moral issues, in order to develop their own point of view on matters relating to religion and values. On this classification, the Italian system would be an example of educating into religion (Gandolfo-Censi 2000), the Estonian system would exemplify educating about religion (Valk 2000), while the English community school system would combine educating about and educating from religion (QCA 2004).

Cutting across these approaches are different views of childhood and autonomy and different views of the role of the teacher that can be found in the educational traditions of particular states. Moreover, each approach is capable of manipulation for ideological purposes. Some approaches to "educating into religion" might allow a considerable level of agency and autonomy to children. Others might be very authoritarian. In the case of "educating about religion(s)," there may be bias, in some education systems, towards or against particular viewpoints. For example, it has been argued that the ostensibly non-confessional "culture of religions" subject in the Russian Federation actually promotes Orthodoxy and nationalism (Willems 2007).

What is crucial is that the general view of the UN, and the policies on teaching about religions developed by the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, should be brought into close dialogue with current national policies across the continent. The first regional debate on "the religious dimension of intercultural education" (held in Athens, 8–9 October, 2007) did exactly this, disseminating the project findings and relating them to current policies in selected member states. The conference also brought

together key members of the Council of Europe project writing team with drafters of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* and key researchers from the EC REDCo Project. This is a model of collaboration that could be adopted by the proposed Council of Europe Centre.

Religious Discourse in the Public Sphere

As noted above, one of the reasons for the Council of Europe's not dealing directly with religions within public education was a concern that issues of religion do not belong in the sphere of public institutions. This view is close to that of *laïcité* as expressed in French law and policy, where the State is required to be neutral in religious matters but guarantees the free exercise of religious worship and the organisation of religious institutions. Recently, the social theorist Jürgen Habermas has stated a view that cuts across the simple public/private distinction (Habermas 2006). Habermas distinguishes between the *formal* public/political sphere, consisting of parliaments, courts, ministries etc, and the *informal* or public/political sphere, which is held to be an appropriate setting for communication between religious and non-religious people. Thus, Habermas maintains that, while political institutions should remain neutral with regard to religion, at the level of discourse between secular and religious citizens (and between citizens of different religious persuasions), religious language and argument can and should be used. Fundamentally, understanding is developed through communication or dialogue. Habermas's view is that it is up to religious people to explain their language, and the values associated with it, to others through dialogue in appropriate settings within the informal public/informal political sphere. Through such communication, "secular" people can learn something about values *from* religious people, while some religious people might learn to re-express their language more meaningfully in the context of late modernity. Habermas has his critics, but his general argument presents a theoretical case that is consistent with the policy shifts that have taken place in the inter-governmental institutions discussed above and it offers some pointers towards the types of procedure and pedagogy that would operationalise their policy initiatives.

In this respect I would argue that the publicly funded school is a microcosm of the informal public/political sphere and is an entirely

appropriate setting for education about religions to take place, provided certain conditions and safeguards are met. The arguments of the inter-governmental organisations — based mainly on human rights and social cohesion — provide a set of reasons for teaching and learning about religions in public education, but they do not go much further than this. They convey a general view that the processes of policy making and curriculum development should be inclusive and dialogical, accepting that bodies formulating curricula should include different interest groups (for example, educators, representatives of religious groups and academic specialists), and that curricula and teaching should aim at impartiality and fairness in representing different positions. However, Habermas's argument takes us further, in that it suggests that citizens from different kinds of background should interact with one another, listen to one another and engage with one another's positions, in developing understanding and participating in the democratic process. If the public school is a microcosm of the informal public/political sphere, there is a need for arrangements within the school that promote this mode of communication. These would include its ethos and view of relationships within the school and with outsiders (especially its attitudes to social diversity) and its pedagogical approaches. Both procedures and pedagogies need to foster communication between those from different backgrounds.[26]

As already noted, there is a good deal of work to be done at the interface between bodies such as the Council of Europe and individual states, and at the level of individual states in developing policies and pedagogies reflecting the level of integration encompassed in international declarations whilst also recognising individual cultural differences. Thus, not all states may be ready to employ fully dialogical pedagogies or pedagogies encouraging students to discuss their own positions and personal views. Elsewhere, I have reviewed a range of pedagogies that have been developed with the intention of helping students to handle religious and spiritual issues and information about religious diversity in the school (Jackson 2004; see also Grimmitt 2000). For the purposes of this article, I will concentrate on the interpretive approach, developed over some years at the University of Warwick. This is designed

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[26] I have written about the school in this way in Jackson 2004, Chapter 10.

particularly to help students to engage with religious diversity in the contemporary world.

The Interpretive Approach

The interpretive approach was developed originally for use in religious education in publicly funded community schools in England and Wales, where the subject is primarily concerned with helping pupils to gain a critical and reflective understanding of religions. Subsequently, it has been developed further in the UK, and has also been used in Norway, Germany, Canada and Japan as well as in the Council of Europe project on religious diversity and intercultural education mentioned above (Council of Europe 2004b; Keast 2007). The approach provides theoretical stimulus for research and pedagogy being conducted by the European Commission REDCo project on religious education in Europe (Weisse 2007). Thus the interpretive approach continues to be used and developed in a variety of contexts (Jackson forthcoming). It is complementary to some other approaches (Jackson 2004, 2006), and is presented as a contribution to theoretical, methodological and pedagogical debates (e.g. Jackson 1997:6). It has been found to be particularly useful in helping students to develop an understanding of religious communities in contemporary society (e.g. O'Grady 2003; Whittall 2005).

The development of the interpretive approach shows the influence of a particular methodology within religious studies (an ethnographic one) on the development of an open and impartial pedagogy for studying religious diversity in schools. The experience of engaging in ethnographic field studies of a way of life very different from my own (initially "Hinduism" in an English city) changed my views about theory and method in qualitative research in religion, and in publicly funded religious education provided for a diverse population. The book *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach* (Jackson 1997) summarised ideas developed from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s during several research studies of children from different religious and ethnic backgrounds in Britain and applied them to teaching and learning about religions in schools.[27] Studies

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[27] Studies of children from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist backgrounds were linked to the generation of religious education theory and the development

specifically of children from a Hindu background, together with some of the theory contributing to the interpretive approach, had already influenced the structure and contents of in introduction to Hinduism aimed primarily at teachers (Jackson and Killingley 1988) and two books for children which drew on the research material (Jackson 1989a; Jackson and Nesbitt 1990).[28] A detailed report on the research on Hindu children was published in 1993, including material discussing the concept of "Hinduism" and various methodological issues (Jackson and Nesbitt 1993).

Participation in ethnographic fieldwork led to questioning the theoretical position of the phenomenology of religion (as articulated by its "classical" exponents), its practical usefulness as a research tool, and its efficacy as a method and approach for religious education (Jackson 1997:7–29). The more philosophical versions of the phenomenology of religion had posited universal ideal types or "essences," embedded in human consciousness and known subjectively through intuition (e.g. Van der Leeuw 1938). Although expressed in different cultural and historical contexts, the "essence" of religion was regarded as universal, and its various "ideal types" — seen almost as Platonic forms or ideas — were given expression through particular examples. Thus, although found in different cultural or historical situations, the meaning of these essences was held to be constant, and could be uncovered through suspending one's own presuppositions and empathising with the "other." There was no questioning of language used. Western (and primarily Christian) terminology tended to be projected on to a wide variety of material in some very different contexts (Jackson 1997:14–24).

The experience of fieldwork pointed up the limitations of the theory and methods of the phenomenology of religion. In brief, the practice of fieldwork showed that terminology and symbols used by adherents rarely had direct equivalents to the Western terminology used by phenomenologists of religion. The issue of interpretation was seen as *primarily linguistic and symbolic*, a matter of grasping how language and

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of a series of texts for children and young people — the Warwick RE Project. The research, entitled "Ethnography and Religious Education," was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (project reference number R000232489).

[28] The methodologies of these texts are discussed in Jackson (1989b).

symbols were used, rather than intuitive. Both the persons being stud-
ied and the researcher were living within social and historical contexts.
Rather than being a "disengaged consciousness," the non-Hindu west-
ern researcher could only start with current language and understand-
ings and take as much care as possible not to superimpose pre-conceived
meanings on to new material. Grasping the meaning of terms and sym-
bols depended on observing their *use in context*. Interpretation required,
not the suspension of presuppositions (how can one be confident of
knowing one's own presuppositions?), but rather comparison and con-
trast of unfamiliar terms used by adherents with one's own familiar
concepts (Geertz 1983). Additionally, interpretation required placing
particular examples of religious practice or belief within a wider con-
text. At its broadest, this involved analysing the example in relation to
one's current understanding of the whole religious tradition.

Research was recognised as a reflexive and dialogical process. In other
words, the process of trying to grasp someone else's terminology was
not simply about grasping their use of words or symbols, but included
a questioning of *one's own* understanding and use of terms, such as
"religion," "religions" and "Hinduism" and a critical interest in the his-
torical development of this terminology, especially since the eighteenth
century. This history encompasses the development of the fields of
comparative religion and phenomenology of religion, including the emer-
gence of the names of some of the religions — such as Hinduism (Jackson
1996; Jackson and Killingley 1988; Jackson and Nesbitt 1993) — in
the nineteenth century, and the use in religious studies and religious
education of expressions such as "religions of the world" and "world
religions" in the twentieth century (Jackson 1997:49–60). The key
point is that interaction with the West resulted in: religions being
regarded by Westerners as systems of belief with similar structures;
"insiders" adopting western terminology (e.g. "Hindu religion"; "Hin-
duism") and "insiders" producing competing ideas of the nature of the
religion (for example, different versions of "Hinduism") (Jackson
1996). The work of Edward Said, in particular, was important in high-
lighting the element of power as one factor in the formation and repre-
sentation of religions — whether by "outsiders" (including writers of
travelogues, histories and research reports) or "insiders" of different
kinds (Said 1978).

The experience of ethnographic research on "Hinduism" called for a more flexible way of representing religious material than found in comparative religion or the phenomenology of religion. Wilfred Cantwell Smith's book *The Meaning and End of Religion* was an inspirational source, in which "religion" was represented in terms of an interplay between individual faith and cumulative tradition (Smith 1978). However, Smith's views on faith, tradition and religious language were not adopted. Whereas Smith advocated the removal of words such as "religion," "religions" and "Hinduism" from scholarly use, I accepted that these and many other English terms should be used, but flexibly and critically. I did not adopt Smith's concept of "faith" (preferring reference to the self-orientation of individuals — for example in relation to the transcendent — in the context of their own groups and tradition), and I introduced the notion of "membership groups," an idea that transforms Smith's idea of tradition. "Membership groups" are not collections of isolated individuals, but are interactive networks of communication through which, for example, religious language and tradition are mediated to the young (Jackson 1997:96–104; Jackson and Nesbitt 1993). "Religions" were not seen as belief systems, with necessary and sufficient conditions for inclusion, but as broad religious traditions, reference points for individuals and groups, whose shape and borders are often contested, but with descriptive content. The character of specific religious traditions as "wholes" varies; the "structure" of "Hinduism" is different from that of "Christianity," for example. Nevertheless, we can speak meaningfully of "religions" or "religious traditions" that are related by family resemblance and have in common some reference to the transcendence of ordinary human experience. Despite demarcation and boundary issues, religious traditions generally can be distinguished from related cultural or ideological forms.[29]

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[29] Thus, in its view of "religions," the interpretive approach is closer, for example, to the broad position represented in religious studies by Gavin Flood (1999) than it is to Timothy Fitzgerald's fully deconstructive position (2000). The view of "construction" in relation to religions in the interpretive approach is similar to that advanced by James Beckford (2003).

Theory, Method and Pedagogy

The development of this work had theoretical, methodological and pedagogical dimensions. *Theoretically*, it raised questions about the representation and interpretation of religions, and about reflexivity, seeing religious studies and religious education as hermeneutical and dialogical activities. *Theoretically and methodologically*, it drew on social anthropology, especially the interpretive anthropology of Clifford Geertz (e.g. Geertz 1983), itself influenced by literary criticism and the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur (e.g. Geertz 1973). There was also some influence from some of Geertz's critics working within anthropology (e.g. Clifford 1988). The process of interpreting the ways of life of others was seen, not as "hard science," but as a systematic, ethical, reflexive and self-critical process, akin to writing a biography, a history or a piece of literary criticism.

The pedagogical dimension developed from reflecting on the theory and method in a research context and applying the ideas to children's learning. Thus, a fundamental aim for religious education was "to develop an understanding of the grammar — the language and wider symbolic patterns — of religions and the interpretive skills necessary to gain that understanding' (Jackson 1997:133). This "necessitated the development of critical skills which would open up issues of representation and interpretation as well as questions of truth and meaning" and also involved a reflexive element, in which young people were given the opportunity to relate learning to their own views and understandings, to formulate critical comments and to review the methods of study they had been using (Jackson 1997:133–34; 2004:88–89). The following summary of the key concepts of representation, interpretation and reflexivity emphasises their pedagogical application.

Representation

As indicated above, the approach is critical of Western, post-Enlightenment models of representing "world religions" as schematic and homogeneous belief systems, whose essence is expressed through set structures and whose membership is seen in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. However, the approach does not abandon the use of the lan-

guage of "religions" or claim that "religions" as "wholes" are incapable
of description, but is critical of approaches which essentialise or stere-
otype them. A model for representing religious material is developed
which encourages an exploration of the relationship between individu-
als in the context of their religious and cultural groups and to the
wider religious tradition. The *religion* or *religious tradition* is seen as
a contested "whole." *Individuals* relate to various groups. *Groups* are
of different, sometimes overlapping, types (sub-traditions, "streams,"
denominations, ethnic groups, sects and movements, castes, families,
peer groups etc. [Jackson 1997:64–65]), and they are socially interac-
tive and communicative, providing the context for the processes of
"transmission" of tradition, "nurture" and "socialisation" we investi-
gated in various Warwick research projects (Jackson and Nesbitt 1993;
Nesbitt 2004).

It also should be noted that processes of "transmission" take place
within a matrix of both traditional and modern plurality (Jackson
2004). Young people interacting with parents, community leaders,
peers from the same background, texts, spiritual teachers etc. also inter-
act with other sources of value, and the types and degrees of interaction
may vary over time.

Examining the interplay between individuals in the context of their
groups and the wider tradition offers a view of religions which acknowl-
edges their complexity and internal diversity, including their varying
interactions with "culture." The personal and group-tied elements of
religions are emphasized, with religion being presented as part of lived
human experience. The approach is not relativistic in relation to truth,
aiming for a procedural epistemological openness and acknowledging
varying and often competing truth claims (e.g. Jackson 1997:122–26).

Interpretation

The interpretive methodology relates closely to work in recent interpre-
tive anthropology/ethnography. Rather than asking learners to leave
their presuppositions to one side, the method requires a comparison
and contrast between the learner's concepts and those of people being
studied. Sensitivity on the part of the student is regarded as a necessary
condition, with empathy only being possible once the terms and symbols

of the other's discourse have been grasped. This process is not necessarily complex. The Warwick RE Project books for children show many examples of interpretation. For example, in introducing young children (aged 5–7) to a boy from a Buddhist family sitting quietly in a meditation hall at a rural English Thai Forest Hermitage monastery, the teacher explores "noisy times" and "quiet times" with children in the class. Children give a variety of reasons why they like to be noisy and quiet. They then listen to the story of the Buddhist boy's visit to the monastery and start to think about why he might be having a "quiet time" in the meditation hall. The teacher feeds in information from the book, and the children compare their ideas about "quiet times" with those of the Buddhist family. Interpretation also overlaps with issues of representation in also examining the relationship between individual cases in the context of groups in relation to a developing idea of the wider religious tradition.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is understood here as the relationship between the experience of students and the experience of those whose way of life they are attempting to interpret. Three aspects of reflexivity are identified in relation to the interpretive approach. Firstly, learners are encouraged to review their understanding of their *own* way of life (edification). Secondly, they are helped to make a constructive critique of the material studied at a distance; and thirdly, they are involved in reviewing their methods of study.

Edification

It is illuminating that anthropologists have written about how their studies of others have prompted some form of re-assessment of their understanding of their *own* ways of life (e.g. Leach 1982:127). In the interpretive approach, the term "edification" was used to describe this form of learning.[30] This reflexive activity is not easy in practice to sepa-

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[30] This concept has some features in common with Michael Grimmitt's idea of "learning from" religion but is not identical to it (see Grimmitt 1987:225; Jackson 1997:131–32).

rate from the process of interpretation. Interpretation might start from the other's language and experience, then move to that of the student, and then move between the two. Thus the activity of learning about another's way of life is inseparable in practice from that of pondering on questions raised by it. Such reflexive activity is personal to the student and teachers cannot guarantee that it will happen. They can, however, ensure that it is not stifled by giving time and providing structured opportunities for reflection. Moreover, making this type of connection often helps to motivate students. As Kevin O'Grady has demonstrated in his action research with secondary pupils in the north of England (O'Grady 2003, 2005), a religious education disconnected from pupils' own questions and concerns is very likely to fail to engage and to motivate them.

It should be made clear that "being edified" by studying religious material does not imply *adopting* the beliefs of followers of that religion. It does, however, build upon a genuinely positive attitude towards diversity, seeing the meeting between people with different beliefs and practices as enriching for all, and seeing individual identity as being developed through meeting "the other."

Edification may not only result from studying religions or cultures other than one's own. As Wilna Meijer has noted in relation to religious education (Meijer 2004), and Barbara Myerhoff has demonstrated in her anthropological research (Myerhoff 1978), the study of *one's own* ancestral tradition, in religious or cultural terms, can also give new insights in re-examining one's sense of identity. In the case of religious education, young people might see religions, including the one of their own history, from a new perspective. Ethnographic source material, plus data from locally conducted studies, could provide a basis for this, as could historical material (whether from local or wider sources).

However, despite the fact that "edification" does not imply *adopting* the beliefs of others, there would be some difficulties in applying this element of the interpretive approach to studies of religion within certain education systems, such as those of France and the USA. Activities in which students express their own views and opinions on religious matters might be regarded as deviating from the requirement that public schools should be entirely neutral in areas of religion. Bruce Grelle, an authority in the debate about religion in public education in the USA, suggests an adaptation to the reflexive aspect of the interpretive

approach for the American context, providing an alternative way of making the connection between knowledge and understanding and pupils' personal lives. He does this through linking religious education to citizenship education, with an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic democracy, rather than on the sharing of personal views. "Teaching about diverse religious and secular worldviews and ways of life," argues Grelle, "becomes a venue for helping students understand their rights to religious liberty or freedom of conscience as well as their responsibility to protect those same rights for their fellow citizens" (Grelle 2006). There are clearly possibilities for developing the approach in this direction within societies operating a strictly "teaching about" methodology.

Constructive Criticism

Reflexivity also involves engaging critically with material studied. Managing such critical work is a sensitive pedagogical issue, especially in pluralistic classrooms. Criticism can also be applied fruitfully to method. Just as researchers should spend time reflecting on the effectiveness and the ethics of the methods they have used, so a critique of religious education methods should be part of its content. This methodological self-awareness can reveal issues of representation and can also stimulate creative ideas for improvement, in the presentation of findings to others, for example (Jackson and Killingley 1988:50–55).

Developments

Initially the pedagogical ideas, and the data from ethnographic studies, were used in the development of curriculum texts (the Warwick RE Project) written for children of different ages (e.g. Barratt 1994a, b; Barratt and Price 1996a, b; Everington 1996a, b; Jackson, Barratt and Everington 1994; Mercier 1996; Wayne et al. 1996). The books aimed to help learners (and teachers) to use interpretive methods in engaging with ethnographic data on children from religious backgrounds, portrayed in the context of the communities in which they lived and the wider religious tradition to which they related.

Subsequently, the broad approach has been (and continues to be) developed in a number of directions. In relation to pedagogy, these

include pupil-to-pupil dialogue (e.g. Ipgrave 2001; McKenna, Ipgrave and Jackson, forthcoming), using students' concerns and questions as a starting point for the exploration of religious material as a means to foster student motivation (O'Grady 2003, 2005) and using concepts from a religion as a starting point for exploring that tradition through examples of individuals and groups (Whittall 2005).

As indicated above, the interpretive approach also provides theoretical stimulus for research and pedagogical development within the EC REDCo project (Weisse 2007). Here, the interpretive approach is not used to impose any uniformity in theory, epistemology or method, but as a source for questions to be applied both to field research methods and to pedagogy. Each group of questions corresponds to one of the three key concepts of the approach (Jackson 2008).

The key concepts of the interpretive approach also provide stimulus for a group of studies being conducted by members of a "community of practice" as a specific UK contribution to the wider REDCo Project.[31] These studies combine insights from the interpretive approach with theory and method related to action research (O'Grady 2007a) in developing pedagogies that foster dialogue and address religious conflict. The work of the community of practice includes the articulation of the shared concepts of the interpretive approach consistently, clearly and critically in a variety of contexts, including primary and secondary classrooms, teacher education courses and the continuing professional development of teachers (O'Grady 2007b).[32]

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a clear drive from international and European inter-governmental institutions for the adoption of studies of religions, or studies of religions and beliefs, in publicly funded schools. Policy

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[31] The concept of a community of practice refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations (Wenger 1998).
[32] Jackson (forthcoming) discusses developments to the interpretive approach in a European and wider international context.

recommendations and guiding principles from such organisations are being considered by governments and educators in relation to current provision for "religious education" in its various forms. In converting new or adapted policies into practice, educators will need to consider the use of appropriate pedagogies. While mixed approaches, meeting the needs of specific national systems and local situations, are likely to be needed, the interpretive approach, in its various forms, is offered as a flexible methodology for addressing religious diversity in contemporary societies — and issues related to it such as cultural racism and stereotyping. Finally, the importance of the study of religions as an academic field should be mentioned. Although non-specialist teachers can be provided with appropriate education and training as part of their continuing professional development, a supply of specialists in the science of religions will be needed within the teaching professions of all states which introduce teaching and learning about religions. Specialists are needed in order to contribute their expertise to teaching and curriculum development programmes.

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Religious Education in Switzerland as a Field of Work for the Study of Religions: Empirical Results and Theoretical Reflections

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Abstract

The following article addresses the current state of religious education in Switzerland and the involvement of the study of religions in this field. Since the 1990s, the existence of different religions and world-views has become a politically and socially significant factor in Switzerland. Not only representatives of public schools and particularly teachers of religious education, but also scholars of the study of religions, are challenged by the consequences of this multireligious and multicultural situation. During the past few years, religious education therefore has become a scholarly issue for this discipline in the German-speaking area. The article demonstrates what the engagement of the study of religions in the practical field of religious education should be like and how this has already been worked out. The authors differentiate between basic research, applied research and application, referring to their own research and practical experience. Based on empirical data, two basic forms of religious education are generated: *religiöser Unterricht*, which treats objects of religious traditions in a religious manner, including a dogmatic and a life-world sub-type, and *religionskundlicher Unterricht*, which treats objects of religious traditions in the scholarly way of the cultural studies. In the last part of the article some cornerstones for the implementation of the school subject *Religionskunde* and for the development of an applied didactics in the perspective of the study of religions are presented.

Keywords

religious education in Switzerland, religion and school, religious education and the study of religions, basic and applied research, object and frame of religious education, *religiöser Unterricht* and *religionskundlicher Unterricht*, didactics of *Religionskunde*

1. Multicultural Diversity and the General Situation of Religious Education in Swiss Public Schools

Similar to other Central European countries, the study of religions (*Religionswissenschaft*) in Switzerland only recently discovered religious education *(Religionsunterricht)* as a field of research. This is due to the changes in the religious landscape of European societies and the development of contemporary religious studies as an area of research. Until the 1970s, Switzerland, unlike former colonial empires like Great Britain or France, only had to integrate foreigners from Southern European countries like Italy, Spain or Portugal. As people from these countries usually were members of the Roman Catholic Church, their integration into the Swiss religious landscape was comparatively easy. Pupils attended religious education provided by the Roman Catholic Church and/or the school subject "Biblical History" *(Biblische Geschichte)*.

Since the 1980s school classes have become more and more heterogeneous concerning religious orientation, caused by an increased immigration from countries in which non-Christian religions are practised. The subject "Biblical History," with Christian theology and Christian religious pedagogy as its disciplines of reference, no longer seemed to be suitable for pupils of different religions and world-views as well as for a multicultural society in general. The study of religions was not only induced to start research in this field but also to actively contribute to new models of religious education, taking into consideration the multireligious society — and also the growing number of "secular" children who do not have any religious background.

1.1. *The Demographic Situation*

Demographic data from the year 2000 show that the number of Christian Church members in Switzerland has decreased considerably. During the past ten years, the proportion of Roman Catholic Church members decreased from 46.15 % to 41.82 % and that of Evangelical-Reformed Church members from 38.51% to 33.04% of the total population.[1] In contrast, the population with non-Christian religious or

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[1] We follow the official publication of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office: Bovay 2004. The data relate to the national census, which unlike other European countries,

secular orientation has increased: 4.3% (ca. 311,000 persons) are Muslims, about 1% belong to other non-Christian religions, whereas the population without any religious affiliation amounts to 11.1% (ca. 810,000 persons). Among the Muslim as well as the non-confessional groups, the proportion of young people (under the age of twenty) is much higher than among the rest of the population. As a result, the proportion of Muslims and non-confessionals in classes at school is estimated to be three times larger compared to the proportion they comprise among the total population. A teacher therefore may expect 15–20% of the pupils in his class to be Muslim and 20–30% to be non-religious.

1.2. *Religious Education in the Federal Constitution of Switzerland*

In Switzerland, freedom of religion is an important part of the Federal Constitution, whereas the relationship between church and state, as well as public school affairs, are regulated on a cantonal basis. Nonetheless, the article on freedom of religion in the Federal Constitution (which is written in German and French) entails a section on *religiöser Unterricht/enseignement religieux* (religious teaching), carefully balancing the positive and negative aspects of freedom of religion:

> 3. Jede Person hat das Recht, einer Religionsgemeinschaft beizutreten oder anzugehören und religiösem Unterricht zu folgen.
> 4. Niemand darf gezwungen werden, einer Religionsgemeinschaft beizutreten oder anzugehören, eine religiöse Handlung vorzunehmen oder religiösem Unterricht zu folgen.[2]

In preparing religious education as a subject to be taught at school, the cantons have to take this section into consideration. As a consequence of the changing religious landscape, some cantons have developed new models of compulsory religious education, which — by the interpretation

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such as Germany, regularly ascertains data of Christian Church members as well as of non-Christian religious orientations.

[2] "Everyone has the right to join or belong to a religious community and to participate in religious teaching. Nobody can be forced to join or belong to a religious community and to participate in religious teaching" (our translation).

of the cantons — are not subject to this article of the Swiss Federal Constitution.

1.3. *The Organisation of Religious Education in Public Schools*

The organisation of religious education in Switzerland is generally rather complicated. Almost all of the 26 cantons have their own standards.[3] Principally there are three organisational models:

(a) The cantonal authorities of education themselves have the responsibility for religious education. In some cantons, religion is part of a subject-combination like *Mensch und Umwelt* (Human beings and the Environment), *Natur, Mensch, Mitwelt* (Nature, Human beings, Social world), etc.
(b) The cantonal authorities ask the Christian Churches (and sometimes other religious communities as well) to offer religious education at the public schools.
(c) The cantonal authorities have the responsibility of providing religious education, additionally offering the religious communities opportunities to provide confessional school lessons within the school schedule and in the classrooms.

In practice, these models of organisation are sometimes combined (Belliger 2002; Loretan 2005). Especially in the first model, religious communities and their theologians often are involved in advising politicians, designing teaching material and training school teachers at colleges of education *(Pädagogische Hochschulen)* and universities (Jödicke and Frank 2007).

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[3] At the moment, there is a project, organised by the *Erziehungsdirektorenkonferenz* (the Federal Council of the Ministers of Education), which aims at harmonising the cantonal curricula and syllabuses, including the syllabuses for religious education, called HarmoS. See http://www.edk.ch/d/EDK/Geschaefte/framesets/ mainHarmoS_d.html [10.11.07].

2. The Study of Religions and Religious Education

The pluralisation of religious orientations in Switzerland — and similarly in other countries in Central Europe — challenges the study of religions *(Religionswissenschaft)* to develop its own approach as a discipline of reference for religious education. Nevertheless, the historical development has been different: Having been responsible for conventional models of religious education, Christian theologians were the first ones to conceive the inconsistencies of these models. In order to develop their own approach, they tried to include non-Christian religious traditions, asking either insiders of the respective traditions or colleagues from Religious Studies to provide the information needed. As a discipline of reference, they occasionally made use of the (pluralistic) theology of religions, a sub-discipline of theology (for a comprehensive overview, see Schmidt-Leukel 1997). The paradigm of interreligious dialogue, which has been important for religious education programmes in England and Wales (e.g. Hull 1996), as well as Germany and Switzerland (e.g. Leimgruber 1995), is connected to this sub-discipline of theology.

From a study-of-religions point of view, it seems problematic that the theology of religions only concerns the *Christian* understanding of non-Christian religious traditions. If these concepts are applied for religious education purposes, it is not possible to take into consideration the educational aims of non-Christian religions, which may differ from Christian educational aims. And, what is more, they do not take into account religiously indifferent attitudes. The school authorities considered this situation unsatisfactory. Therefore, in French-speaking countries and parts of Switzerland like Geneva, public agents, and also different academic disciplines (e.g. the science of education) pleaded for an inclusion of religions in school education in a non-theological way (for France cf. Debray 2002, for Switzerland cf. Hutmacher 1999).

2.1. *Religious Education: A New Challenge for the Study of Religions*

In the German-speaking area of Switzerland the study of religions is closely connected with the development of this discipline in Germany. Although the juridical and traditional frameworks of religious

education of both countries are rather different, the scholarly discourses follow the language boundaries. One of the first events that compelled the study of religions in the German-speaking countries to look at its new task, was the reunification of Germany in 1989/1990.[4]

Because of the high degree of secularisation in Eastern Germany, the conventional Western models of *Religionsunterricht* (religious education) did not seem appropriate. Scholars of the study of religions were at that time engaged in the design of a model for a new school subject (Grözinger et al. 1999). At a conference organised by the Potsdam Institute for the Study of Religions and the German Association for the History of Religions (DVRW), outlines of a new subject called *Lebensgestaltung — Ethik — Religionskunde* (life skills — ethics — religion in a study-of-religions perspective — abbreviated as LER), were developed for Brandenburg, one of the new federal states. In retrospective, the challenges to organise religious education in Eastern Germany after the reunification seem to mark the starting point for a new field of research and — what is perhaps even more remarkable — also a new field of application for the German-speaking study of religions.

As a starting point for the study-of-religions public contribution to this issue in Switzerland, a conference in Zurich can be mentioned. It was organised by the two authors of this article in March 2003 on the occasion of the introduction of the new school subject *Religion und Kultur* (religion and culture).[5]

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[4] Even before, some scholars of the study or religions actively participated in this field, cf. Körber 1988, or various publications of Udo Tworuschka, mainly related to confessional and interreligious models of religious education, e.g. Tworuschka 1983.

[5] Cf. chapter 4.2. The conference title was *Kulturelle Tradierung und religiöse Sozialisation* (cultural transmission and religious socialisation). Having been organised in cooperation with the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zurich, it included participants from all Swiss chairs of the study of religions (Richard Friedli, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, Maya Burger, Martin Baumann, Philippe Borgeaud) and some other scholars from Switzerland, including Ulrich Rudolph (Islamic Studies) and Peter Schreiner (Indology) and from Germany, including Peter Antes and Burkhard Gladigow. As an experimental step, representatives of the religious communities of the Canton of Zurich were invited to present basics of their respective religious traditions, which they considered to be integrated in the syllabus of the new school subject. In this way, an encounter between the perspectives of insiders and outsiders was arranged.

Research in the field of religious education from a study-of-religions perspective entails a double challenge: On the one hand, there has hardly been any research before in contemporary European societies. Until the second half of the 20th century, scholars of our discipline usually solely studied foreign cultures and past epochs, leaving the present and the religious traditions of their own societies to theologians and sociologists. On the other hand, the study of religions was not used to doing research in a field which had so many practical implications. From the outside of its own academic discipline, the study of religions was regarded as a new competitor in the field of religious education — and, among Christian theologians, as a new rival of religious pedagogy.

2.2. *Basic Research, Applied Research, and Practice: A Clarification*

In the present situation, the study of religions first of all has to clarify its own role in the field of religious education. It is necessary to distinguish between the following aspects of the task:

- religious education as a subject of *basic research* (1)
- religious education as a subject of *applied research* (2)
- religious education as a *field of practice or application* (3)

(1) *Basic research* is necessary in fields where there is little knowledge about the subject. This applies to religious education in contemporary European societies. We know little about religious transmission *(Tradierung)* in multireligious classes at public schools. Several important questions have to be answered: Which religious traditions are the objects of education? How do teachers conceptualise them, and how do they conceptualise the multireligious dimension? How many children are religiously educated and which religious traditions do they belong to? What do curricula and syllabuses look like?[6] What are the specifics of religious education, compared to other school subjects like history or human geography? What are the differences between religious education and ethics or life skills *("Lebenskunde")*? This type of research deals

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[6] Concerning Islamic syllabuses and curricula, see Mohr 2006.

with a large variety of categories. It is not designed to represent specific interests of religious groups or political stakeholders.[7]

(2) *Applied research*[8] concentrates on topics that are directly related to practical work. Important questions are the following: How do curricula and syllabuses have to be examined from the perspective of the responsible agents, for instance, religious communities or state authorities?[9] How can curricula and syllabuses of education be improved or what should a new programme look like on the basis of the findings of this type of research? How does a certain religious education model work in reality?[10] Which corrections could be made? Applied research therefore has to refer to a certain set of tested criteria elaborated in basic research dealing with the same questions. Yet, unlike basic research, applied research has to take into account the different interests of the involved parties or stakeholders.

(3) Concerning the *practical dimension of the study of religions* we have to distinguish between different spheres:

– A scholar trained in the study of religions can work as an adviser to politicians and lawyers who implement the principles of education. The political situation is crucial for religious education in a certain country or a canton. Politicians have to respond to the changes in society. Therefore they are interested in appropriate advice.[11]

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[7] Examples for this type of research are: Katharina Frank's empirical research on teaching strategies in religious education at Swiss public schools, cf. below, chapter 3. Another example is a new project of Ansgar Jödicke, University of Fribourg, on "Religious Education between the State and Religious Communities", which is part of the National Research Programme 58, "Religion, state and society," of the Swiss National Science Foundation, see: http://www.nfp58.ch/e_projekte_jugendliche.cfm.

[8] In the following paragraph we take into account the research of Robert K. Merton, cf. Merton 1949.

[9] In this context, for instance the problem of religious normativity — in its open and also hidden aspects — has to be taken into account as an object of research. Cf., for example, Bochinger 2003; Frank 2007.

[10] E.g. Asbrand 2000. This qualitative-empirical study, starting from an intercultural pedagogic perspective, analyses interreligious school lessons in Hamburg and specifies the teacher's didactics and aims. Thus, practical effects of the guiding concepts are shown.

[11] For example, the involvement of the Seminar for the Study of Religions at the University of Zurich in advising the local *Bildungsdirektion* could be mentioned,

- Scholars of religious education may collaborate with others in conceptualising teacher training or may actively take part in this training.[12]
- On a more practical level, scholars of the study of religions can design curricula, syllabuses and teaching material — or cooperate in interdisciplinary settings.[13]
- Furthermore, they can teach classes as far as they are trained in the didactics of the study of religions (see chapter 5).

Although these roles of the study of religions have to be clearly differentiated, they should be related to each other. Practical application should make use of the findings of basic research as well as applied research in the field of religious education, whereas observations stemming from experiences in the different fields of application should be taken into consideration in further research.

2.3. *Terms and Concepts*

Until now, we have used "religious education" as a generic term for all kinds of education that impart knowledge about religion(s) in one form or other. However, the semantics of this term are rather ambiguous. Besides its function as a generic term, it may also be taken to refer to a model of teaching which is religious in itself.[14] The term is especially dubious in the context of continental European discussions because of its proximity to the German term *religiöser Unterricht* and the French term *enseignement religieux*. Both of them clearly signify the religious orientation of this model of teaching, as discussed above in the context

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helping to develop teacher training for the new school subject *Religion und Kultur* — and also criticising the syllabus made by Christian theologians for its hidden normativity, cf. below, chapter 4.2.

[12] This is the case in Zurich.

[13] For example, Udo Tworuschka has developed a variety of teaching media for religious education, focusing on interreligious teaching models, but also on teaching "world religions," especially Islam, in confessional Christian school teaching. As another example, Christoph Bochinger was a member of the local commission for the development of a syllabus for the teaching of "Islamic religion" in the German Federal State of Bavaria (the so called Erlangen Model, cf. 2.4.).

[14] Cf. the analogous problem with the term "religious studies."

of the Federal Constitution of Switzerland (see chapter 1.2.). Therefore we doubt whether "religious education" is an adequate term. However, as the alternatives that were proposed by some Anglo-Saxon authors, for instance "religion education" (e.g. Chidester 2002), are not yet established, we provisionally retain the term "religious education" with its generalising generic meaning.

The German term *Religionsunterricht*, which can be literally understood as a generic term for all kinds of religious education, poses a similar problem. In this sense, the term is particularly used in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, whereas in Germany, due to special regulations of the German Constitution, it is often restricted to a *religious* model. Therefore, we have to stress the fact that we do not follow the usage of *Religionsunterricht* in the sense of German theologians and also specialists in constitutional law, who tend to restrict the term to the model of religious education that is in accordance with the principles of the respective religious communities (cf. Art. 7, 3 of the German Constitution).

In spite of this controversial use of terminology, we consider a generic term as an imperative for research and application in this field. There has to be a distinction between school subjects, in which religion(s) is (are) taught, and other subjects like ethics, life skills, history or geography. Therefore, we will use both terms in their generic sense, covering all variants of respective school subjects.

2.4. *Common Models for Religious Education*

During the past twenty years, different concepts have been presented in programmatic literature dealing with religious education as a school subject. They are usually divided into three models:[15]

- (a) confessional education (in German: *konfessionsgebundener Unterricht)*
- (b) interreligious education
- (c) *Religionskunde* (religious education in a non-religious way).

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[15] This distinction is especially familiar in German speaking countries, but we suppose that it is partly comparable with the common differentiation between education *into, from* and *about* religion.

Ad (a): The confessional model of religious education orientates itself towards a specific religious tradition, which is the teacher's as well as the pupils' "own." This model of religious education intends to introduce pupils to a certain religious tradition and/or to deepen their understanding of this tradition. Now that society has become religiously plural, also non-Christian communities demand their own "confessional" education at public schools.

For this model of religious education the following criteria seem to be typical:

- The lessons focus on one's "own" religious tradition, its specific ideology and its practice.
- Teachers are members of the respective religious communities.
- The pupils' participation is very often voluntary (since they and their parents have the right to exemption) — which is also true for the teachers, who may not be asked to teach this subject against their will.
- As far as other religions are the object of teaching, the tradition of the teacher (and the pupils) is used as a frame of reference.

In Switzerland, confessional education is institutionalised in different cantons. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church usually administer their own religious education classes at public schools. In the Canton of Lucerne however, Islamic religious education has been taught for several years now.[16] Also in Austria and some schools in Germany, a confessional model of religious education for Muslim children has been introduced.[17]

Ad (b): The interreligious model of school education has often been recommended for classes where several religions and world-views are represented. For this model the following criteria seem to be typical:

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[16] Cf. http://www.sad.ch/Projekte/deatil/Islamischer-Religionsunterricht-im-Schulhaus/onecat/Alle-Projekte/0/all_items. [10/12/2007]

[17] In Germany, especially the "Erlangen Model" can be mentioned as an example of this type. It was implemented by the Bavarian regional government. Unlike other German models of Islamic teaching at public schools it includes most characteristics of the confessional type.

– Unlike model (a), more than one religious tradition is addressed. Theoretically, there is a common frame of reference, referring to a multitude of religious traditions and drawing on principles of interreligious dialogue.
– As in the confessional model, "religion" and "religiousness" have positive connotations, because they are considered to be anthropogenic constants in a wide sense, presupposing personal openness towards "religion" and towards "religious pluralism."
– Teachers and pupils reveal their own creeds and convictions.

In Switzerland, this model of religious education is implemented in several syllabuses, aiming at all pupils of the respective classes. In Germany, the so called *Hamburger Weg* is arranged according to this model (Doedens and Weisse 2000).

Ad (c): For the third model *(Religionskunde)*, the following criteria seem to be typical:

– Unlike model b), "religion" (or "religiousness") is not supposed to be an anthropogenic constant. This model takes into account that there are many individuals (teachers, parents, pupils) in modern society who do not have any religious convictions.
– Religions are seen as cultural phenomena, which are to be treated just as other cultural phenomena. There should be neither a positive nor a negative connotation regarding "religion" and "religiousness."

In Western European countries, this model of religious education is still new.[18] In German speaking countries, *Religionskunde* was first institutionalised in Brandenburg, Germany, as an integral part of *LER* (cf. chapter 2.1). It has to some degree also been institutionalised in *Religion und Kultur* in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland (cf. chapter 4.2.).

Many Swiss syllabuses draw from more than one of these three models of religious education. In addition, even if they explicitly relate to

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[18] Interestingly, a model of distanced religious education, aiming at "informing" all pupils of a class about religion, has also been implemented many years ago in Turkey in the framework of the Kemalist perspective on laicism. About this model and its political background see Tosun 2005.

one of the models, there is a big difference between the basic concepts of the syllabuses and school practice. This is why it is interesting to do empirical research on the school practice itself.

3. Basic Research on Religious Education in Public Schools in Switzerland — Findings and Results of a Research Project

Although the third model of religious education is close to the approach of the study of religions by nature, the other models can also be the object of basic research in a study-of-religions perspective. In the following chapter, we will therefore present some of the results of a research project, which was carried out by one of the authors, Katharina Frank, between 1999 and 2006.[19] We would like to define this project as *basic research on religious education in public schools.*

The project involved participant observation and the collection of supplementary data at the primary school level. The researcher visited school lessons in fourteen classes in different cantons of Switzerland. As a premise, only classes were chosen at which all pupils of the class were expected to participate and which were held by the class teachers. Nevertheless, there was a great variety of terminologies, conceptual frameworks and syllabuses of the respective school subjects, which in most cases did not explicitly refer to either of the models of religious education mentioned in chapter 2.4.

Although research has been based on data gathered only in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, the generated concepts, dimensions and categories are intended to be used for all models of religious education institutionalised in modern, functionally differentiated societies. Switzerland is an ideal field for this kind of research because of the multifaceted situation of religious education at its public schools. Hence, a wide diversity of teaching styles was to be expected.

As mentioned earlier, the political and juridical framework in Switzerland principally leave room for two organisational models of religious education in public schools. Either the religious communities or

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[19] The project was guided by the late Fritz Stolz at Zurich University and financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It will be submitted as a PhD-thesis during the next months.

the cantonal authorities have the responsibility to organise the classes.[20] Although the educational goals of the two institutions — religious communities and school authorities — seem to be quite different from each other, experience has shown that (up until now) they hardly differ in practice.

3.1. *Initial Research Questions and Methodology*

In the beginning of the research project very fundamental questions were asked: Which styles of religious education can be observed? Which religion(s) are the objects of teaching, and which aspects and issues are communicated? Which methods are used in order to convey these issues to the pupils? Do teachers intend identification with certain religious contents on the part of the pupils or do they just intend to convey objective facts? The main goal of the project was to find as many variations of teaching as possible in regard to the aforementioned questions. Therefore, a qualitative empirical approach, based on the methodology of Grounded Theory, was chosen (Corbin and Strauss 1996). Following this procedure, data from contrasting cases were collected, as long as there were new insights for the research topic.

Very early on, it became clear that it was the teachers who essentially controlled the educational process. Even when they tried to include the pupils' wishes and needs, the teachers ultimately decided whether or not and in which manner an issue was addressed. In conclusion, one can say that, in practice, the educational style depends on the teacher.

3.2. *Object and Frame: Data Based Categories of the Sequences of Lessons*

As a central result, the study was able to show that, for the most part, the structure of teaching stays the same. In nearly all sequences of the lessons, the teachers first presented an *object* of a religious symbol system or of any religious or non-religious area. As a second step, the teachers *framed* this object in a certain way, applying different manners of speaking (cf. Goffman 1980). By analysing the sequences of lessons, categories were generated in relation to the *objects of teaching* and also in relation to the *frames of reference*.

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[20] In some cases, both models are implemented separately at the same school.

3.2.1. *Religious and Non-religious Objects*

As for the *objects*, it can be said that teachers drew on a great variety of religious traditions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Greek religion, Australian religion, Indian Lakota religion were mentioned, including many different elements of the respective traditions, such as texts, rituals, beliefs, everyday behaviour. Sometimes teachers also started a sequence of a lesson by introducing issues which usually are not — or not exclusively — regarded as originating from the religious field, for instance the concept of friendship, the expulsion of foreigners from Switzerland, class conflicts or gender differences.

Although it may initially seem quite easy to distinguish between "religious" and "non-religious" objects, for the main research question it was crucial to decide from a study-of-religions perspective whether a certain object is related to the religious field or not. Consequently, the first step was to ask whether a certain object was part of some kind of religious symbol system: objects like *karma, God, the dance of Shiva, zakat, prayer*, or *Moses* are definitely part of religious symbol systems, but what about *meditation, yoga, mythology, witches, fairytales, marital rites* and similar topics? In these cases it depends on the respective context whether they can be called "religious" or not. Therefore, in a second step, one has to ask whether a certain object is, (a) related to specific codes marking transcendence within the respective symbol system, and (b) at the same time possesses undisputable validity for its users. Only if both requirements were met, we decided to call the respective object "religious." If the object, however, does not refer to any religious symbol system, or only fulfils one of the further conditions, we call it "non-religious."

3.2.2. *Dimensions and Categories of Framing*

Concerning the teacher's *frame of reference*, the dimensions and categories generated by the data relate to several communicative aspects:

(1) The *first dimension* refers to the question whether the framing process only relates to a *single object*, originating from a single religious symbol system, or to *two or more objects*, originating from different religious symbol systems.

(2) The *second dimension* refers to the relation between the object and its frame. The following categories have been generated:

– *No framing.*
– *A slight discontinuity between the object and its frame*, which is only recognisable by a change in how the teacher articulates himself — or herself (e.g. from a narrative to a dogmatic manner of speaking). The recipients usually do not have a chance to clearly differentiate between object and frame.
– *A clear discontinuity between an object and its frame* by a verbal, paraverbal or nonverbal pause and an introductory question of the teacher. Here, the recipients can distinguish between object and framing and therefore are able to notice intuitively that other frames could be related to the object as well.

(3) The *third dimension* refers to the speaker's position and his or her manner of speaking during the framing process. In this case we have to distinguish between three categories:

– A *we-speaker* uses *dogmatic religious codes* like "if we ask God to forgive us, he will forgive us" or "God wanted to prove Abraham's faith when he ordered him to kill his son Isaac," etc.
– A *you-speaker* requests the pupils to relate the presented object to their own lives. In this case, the pupils become a part of the framing process. When framing the object, pupils use codes of *life-world*[21] *language* like happiness, fear, etc. In some cases, they presented comprehensive statements like "I have drawn a sun because God is warm."
– A *they-speaker* uses the third grammatical person in the process of framing. He refers to *cultural-studies*[22] *codes* to describe a ritual or a text of a religious symbol system, introducing a historical and/or social frame by using scientific words and concepts.

3.2.3. *Definition and Types of Religious Education*

On the basis of these categories, generated in relation to the objects of teaching and the frames of reference, two clarifications can be achieved:

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[21] In German *Lebenswelt*, cf. Schütz and Luckmann 2003.
[22] In German *kulturkundlich* or *kulturwissenschaftlich*, cf. Gladigow 2005.

(1) The difference between religious education and non-religious education, for instance ethics or life skills, can be described more precisely.

(2) Concerning religious education, a new typology can be developed, replacing the models described in Chapter 2.4.

Ad (1): *On the level of school lessons, we can speak of religious education, if there is a religious object (as defined above), and/or if the teacher chooses the position of a we-speaker, using dogmatic religious codes in the framing process.* In other words: if the teacher uses dogmatic religious codes in the framing process, we have to speak of religious education no matter whether the object of teaching is religious or not. If, on the other hand, the teacher acts as a *you-speaker* or *they-speaker*, referring to life-world language or to cultural-studies codes, it depends on the object whether the lesson can be called religious or not. Therefore, in these cases we can only speak of religious education if the object is religious. This is an important issue, because religious education (*Religionsunterricht*) is the only field of teaching that has to be in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Switzerland (see above). Most of the lessons observed during the project could in fact be defined as "religious education" in the above sense.

Ad (2): On the basis of the dimensions and categories mentioned above, which were generated in the course of the empirical analysis, seven different types of religious education emerged. Keeping in mind the scope of this article, we subsume them under the three following types:

– *Dogma-related religious education.* In this type, religious or non-religious objects are framed in a dogmatically religious manner, and the discontinuity between object and frame is marked either only slightly or very clearly.
– *Life-world-related religious education.* In this type, religious objects are framed by life-world experiences (which are related to the pupils) or a general anthropogenic perspective (related to the pupils and all human beings).
– *Cultural-studies-related religious education.* In this type, religious objects are framed in the typical manner of cultural studies, related to historical or social categories or in a systematically comparative manner.

3.3. *Some Examples*

3.3.1. *Dogma-Related Religious Education*

A sequence of the first type of religious education is the following one. During the Easter season, a teacher told her pupils about the death of Jesus as described in the Bible. When the researcher visited the lesson, the teacher asked the pupils to recount the story in different ways: how Jesus walked into Jerusalem, how he went to the Mount of Olives, was betrayed and crucified and was then resurrected from the dead after three days. The pupils (including Muslims and non-confessional pupils) were asked to act out these scenes. They had to sing the story and draw the crucifixion scene as told in the biblical text. After that, the teacher asked them to sit in a circle in the front of the classroom. Then she asked a certain pupil: "Now, what does the story of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection mean?" After having given him some assistance, the pupil was able to repeat what had been stated in the last lesson about the same issue: "Jesus wanted to show us that life will go on even after we have died, that we will all rise from the dead just as Jesus did."

This sequence of religious education shows how an object of the Christian religious symbol system is framed in a dogmatic way. The teacher asked a pupil to repeat an interpretation of Easter which was not restricted to the Christians among the pupils but valid "for all of us." The teacher assumed that everyone was part of a Christian we-group, although Muslim and non-confessional pupils were present. In this case, both the object and the frame are "religious," following the definitions explained in chapter 3.2.

3.3.2. *Life-World-Related Religious Education*

To give an example of the second type of religious education, we present the following sequences: One of the teachers discussed the concept of "God" with the pupils. Everyone in the classroom was asked to draw his picture of God on a piece of paper. At first, the pupils were a little confused, but soon they started drawing. After that, the teacher asked the pupils to sit down in a circle in the front of the classroom and explain to the other children what they had drawn. A boy said that his picture, displaying a man holding the world, was meant to be Zeus — and that this was the image of God he had in his mind. One girl had drawn a

circle with rays coming out of it. She explained: "I have drawn a sun because God is warm." Another boy had drawn a man in a boat floating on clouds in the sky — explaining that this was God who was looking at the humans; that he saw everything that was going on in their lives and on earth. Another girl had drawn God on a crucifix. A third girl, who had not received any religious education before, explained that at first, she had not known how to draw God and that she now had drawn God as a circle.

In another lesson the teacher started from the Greek pantheon of gods. He then asked the pupils to create or choose and finally draw their own god. The names and the drawings were also very individual and diverse.

Both examples show that the respective objects — in the first example "God," in the second example "a god" — have been framed according to the life-world of each single pupil.

3.3.3. *Cultural-Studies-Related Religious Education*
Some sequences of the third type of religious education are the following. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher showed the pupils a picture of the temple of Jerusalem. He and the pupils then contextualised the building through social categories (he asked: "Which religious community is this building important to?") and also through historical categories (his question was: "When was this temple built, how was it used, what was its function and what is its meaning for modern Jews living today?").

Another teacher started his lesson by telling the Lakota Indian story of cosmogony and anthropogony. At first, the pupils had to reproduce what they had read previously. After that, the teacher asked them what these Indians imagined the world to be like and how human development was explained in their tradition. A Muslim pupil brought up the element of a rib, which human beings were made from. The teacher asked all of the children which religious tradition this new element belonged to. Although it would have been possible as well to relate this element to the Islamic tradition, the pupils and the teacher in their further discussion only mentioned the Biblical act of creation. Nevertheless, the teacher included the new element of the rib, which a pupil had added to the discussion. Stimulated by this, the teacher generalised

the Lakota story by relating it to a concept of "theories of cosmogony and anthropogony." He then asked the pupils whether they knew of any other "theories" of this kind. In consequence, the pupils referred to different "theories" of cosmogony und anthropogony and described which religious community or world-view the story belonged to.

Another teacher presented two texts, taken from a magazine and a biographical study, portraying the everyday life of two Muslim girls. He asked the pupils to reconstruct the two girls' religious life and assisted them in developing superordinate categories in order to compare the two kinds of lived Islam.

In the first example the teacher contextualised the religious object historically and socially. In the other examples similar phenomena were compared, developing functional criteria in order to relate different stories of cosmogony and anthropogony or different ways of acting out one's religion to the respective religious symbol systems.

3.3.4. *Different Forms of Participation*
Looking at the aims insinuated by the framing process of the religious objects, different forms of participation can be observed:

- *Dogma-related religious education* invites the pupils to adopt a fixed religious idiom. The pupils participate in a certain religious symbol system.
- *Life-world-related religious education* also invites the pupils to communicate in religious codes, but it allows them to use an individual way by which they can express their religiousness through individual or anthropogenic life-world codes. The pupils also participate in a religious symbol system — which is transformed into an individual or anthropogenic form.
- *Cultural-studies-related religious education* invites the pupils to see religions as life-orientated dimensions of persons not present in their lessons. Teachers and pupils communicate in cultural-studies codes, as for instance codes of history, social sciences, or comparative reflection. The participation is restricted to an observation of religious symbol systems, religious communities and their members. The mode of their participation is therefore purely mental and temporary.

3.4. *A New Classification for Religious Education*

The empirical typology, explained in chapter 3.3., results in a new classification for religious education. The multitude of forms of participation and the different aims of teaching which have been outlined can be connected to a variety of different approaches within the field of academic studies. The first type (*dogma-related religious education)* can be easily connected to dogmatic theology, just as *cultural-studies-related religious education* can be combined with the study of religions.

The problem, however, is which academic subject is related to the second type (*life-world-related religious education*). A thorough analysis of the style of communication of this type can only lead to one answer: since the communication process during the religious education class has to be called "religious," it goes together with dogma-related and not with cultural-studies-related teaching. Teachers and pupils communicate in codes of transcendence derived from a certain religious symbol system. The terms God, gods, resurrection, reincarnation, book of revelation etc. are used as if they were real to each and every pupil sitting in the classroom as well as to society as a whole. The teachers presuppose that all humans have a basic religious orientation. They therefore think that they have to provide their pupils with a religious code — whether in a theological-dogmatic or a life-world-related form. This kind of perspective on religious objects is characteristic of theological approaches — including Christian pedagogy of religion, theology of religions and also the classical approaches of the phenomenology of religion. For this form of religious education, we propose the German term *Religiöser Unterricht* (or the French term *enseignement religieux*), to be paraphrased in English as religious education in a religious way on the basis of a theological approach.

In relating the teaching of religions to different approaches of cultural studies, knowledge becomes a central aspect. When using the term "knowledge" we take into account the entire mental dimension, including cognitive and emotional aspects. The pupils know that the respective religious object serves as life orientation for someone else but not necessarily for them. The pupils neither have to agree with a dogmatic perspective nor do they have to reveal their own position on a certain religious topic. For this form of religious education, we would suggest the German term *Religionskundlicher Unterricht* or *Religionskunde.* We

can also take into account the Swedish term *religionskunskap*. In English, we paraphrase this term as religious education in a non-religious way on the basis of the study-of-religions approach.

Considering the fact that the Federal Constitution of Switzerland guarantees its citizens freedom of religion, the difference between those two forms of religious education seems to be crucial. The first form, *Religiöser Unterricht*, cannot be compulsory for all the pupils (see chapter 1.3.), whereas the second form, *Religionskundlicher Unterricht*, does not affect this article of the Constitution. In addition to these reflections on terminology, based on our own empirical categories, we consider further discussions about adequate terms for new and conventional forms of religious education indispensable. We propose not to use programmatic terms (such as "interreligious education") but terms that are empirically based and tested.

4. Applied Research in the Perspective of the Study of Religions

In our understanding, applied research in a study-of-religions perspective has to be founded on basic research providing basic knowledge and criteria for the selection of data and on a methodical design (cf. chapter 2.2.). Because of its direct relation to the practical dimension, applied research presupposes a principal distinction between religious education aiming at all pupils of a class and education which is restricted to the members of a certain religious community or confession. In the following paragraphs, we will present two different examples.

4.1. *Example I: Islamic School Teaching*

As an example of applied research related to confessional religious education, we would like to refer to an interdisciplinary PhD-project which was mentored by one of the authors, Christoph Bochinger, in collaboration with colleagues from pedagogy and (Christian) pedagogy of religion *(Religionspädagogik)*. With this guidance, a German Muslim school teacher, Harry Behr, developed theoretical perspectives for confessional Islamic education curricula at public schools, drawing on a variety of existing Islamic curricula, which he analysed using a qualitative empirical design (Behr 2005). This constituted, to some extent, the starting

point of a new academic discipline in Germany, which can be called "*Islamische Religionspädagogik*" (Islamic pedagogy of religion).[23] Although Behr did not share the perspective of the study of religions, but clearly had in mind a theological model of religious education, the study-of-religions approach was pivotal for defining the scope of his applied studies: an important step was to make a clear distinction between a Muslim theological perspective and already existing perspectives of Protestant and Catholic Christian *Religionspädagogik* (pedagogy of religion).

4.2. *Example II:* Religion und Kultur *in the Canton of Zurich*

The second example refers to the school subject of *Religion und Kultur* in the Canton of Zurich, which was introduced as a compulsory subject at the upper level of the *Volksschule* of public schools.[24] From the perspective of the cantonal authorities, *Religion und Kultur* was planned as a "regular" school subject like history or geography, and not corresponding to the peculiarities of "*Religiöser Unterricht*" according to the definition of the Federal Constitution of Switzerland. As a consequence, we suppose that its scope has to be "secular" and not "religious" — otherwise its compulsory status would contradict the demands of the constitution. Therefore, following our classification, *Religion und Kultur* necessarily has to be structured according to the criteria of a *religionskundlicher Unterricht.*

Prior to the analysis of the new syllabus, we will give a short review of the history of this new subject. In 1991, the Canton of Zurich introduced a confessional-cooperative model of religious education *(konfessionell-kooperativer Religionsunterricht*, abbreviated *KokoRU)*, combining Protestant and Catholic religious education. As an optional subject, this type of religious education was organised by school authorities

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[23] Soon after submitting his thesis at Bayreuth, Behr was appointed to a new chair for "Islamische Religionslehre" at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, cf. http://www.izir.uni-erlangen.de/ [1.11.2007].

[24] The upper level (or secondary school level I) is a part of the *Volksschule*, which all pupils attend until year 9. The upper level is attended by adolescents from the age of 12 to 15.

in accordance with the two officially recognised *Landeskirchen* (the Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church), which supplied the curriculum and the teaching media. Due to a decrease in participation and other reasons, the Canton of Zurich in the year 2001 decided to develop *Religion und Kultur* as a new model. Unlike *KokoRU*, only the cantonal school authorities are responsible for this new subject. In order to integrate the religious communities, the authorities have appointed an advisory board, chaired by a professor for educational science from the University of Zurich. This board includes members of Christian and non-Christian religious communities and a representative of the College of Education of Zurich *(Pädagogische Hochschule, Zürich)*. The model started to be implemented in some public schools during the current school year (2007/2008). It is going to gradually replace *KokoRU*.

In order to prepare the new school subject, the University and the College of Education of Zurich have developed a joint programme for teacher training: The University is responsible for the scholarly perspective (the so called *fachwissenschaftliche Anteile*), and the College of Education for didactics (*fachdidaktische Anteile*). The subject *Religion und Kultur* is optional for prospective teachers, and it has to be combined with other school subjects like maths or French. The teacher training courses offered by the respective academic disciplines at the University of Zurich, including Indology and Islamic Studies, covers five so called "world religions." Christianity is taught by members of the Faculty of Theology, who — just like the other disciplines — are supposed to follow a cultural-studies perspective. The representatives of the study of religions serve as coordinators and also provide some of the scholarly parts of the training.

When the new subject was prepared, the school authorities asked the College of Education to develop a syllabus (which is the usual procedure in the Canton of Zurich). Therefore, the academic disciplines that cooperate in the training of the future teachers were not part of this procedure. The first syllabus was published in 2006. Soon after its publication, it was criticised by scholars of the study of religions because of its closeness to (inter-) religious models of religious education (see chapter 2.4.), which do not correspond to the criteria defined by the cantonal Council of Education. A revised syllabus has been available

since the end of 2006.[25] The new version, however, still seems to be close to *religiöser Unterricht*. Because of the basic conditions of the Federal Constitution mentioned above, the character of the syllabus is not only a matter of academic debate, but may have major legal consequences.

To give an example for applied research, we are going to analyse this syllabus on the basis of our categories:

To begin with, the importance of the pupils' religious identities are emphasised in the syllabus (p. 1). It is argued that a multireligious society and multifarious media entail new challenges for individual identity. In consequence, the competence of knowing how to handle individual religious questions and also accepting different religious traditions is considered to be the central goal of *Religion und Kultur*. Therefore, the representation of "world religions" is closely connected to the pupils' life-worlds (cf. pp. 2–3).

Taking into account the essentially secular character of the new subject, we consider the starting point of the syllabus to be wrong. Educational efforts should not focus on the pupils' individual religious identities. "Religion" should rather be regarded as a part of the pupils' *environment*, because they have to learn how to live, behave and act as citizens within a multireligious society — no matter whether they consider themselves "religious" or not. From this viewpoint, religious questions, or items, are not "anthropogenic." Therefore, one can not expect the pupils to have "religious questions." The questions, as well as the related answers, can rather be associated with religious traditions or communities. If the teacher presents religious questions as if they were anthropogenic or universal by nature (seeming like questions the pupils would have), and therefore tries to acquaint them with answers different religions may give, he constructs some sort of religiousness of the pupils. This is not adequate for secular school teaching — and it seems hardly in conformity with the prescriptions for positive *and* negative freedom of religion of the Swiss Constitution.

In the following paragraphs, the syllabus presents three major approaches to teaching religion(s): a historical-descriptive approach (*historisch-deskriptiver Zugang*), a society-oriented, political approach

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[25] See http://www.vsa.zh.ch/site/index__gast-d-1759–23–1877.html [1.11.07].

(*gesellschaftsorientiert-politischer Zugang*), and a life-world approach (*lebensweltlicher Zugang*). It also presents several examples, which do not only demonstrate these approaches but closely connect them to different objects of teaching (cf. pp. 3–4).

Hence, the syllabus does not sufficiently distinguish between the *objects* of teaching and the *approach (or frame)*. It implies that certain objects can only be discussed on the basis of the respective approach. Especially the life-world dimension of religions, for instance "Leben als Muslime in der Schweiz" (living as a Muslim in Switzerland; p. 6), which is an object of teaching, is confused with the life-world of the pupils.[26] Again, this approach is not appropriate, because it forces pupils with a Muslim background to personally identify themselves *as being Muslim*. Generally speaking, the approach tries to promote the pupils' (Muslim or non-Muslim) religious attitudes. The life-world dimension of religions should instead be approached in an ethnographic or sociological way, which allows everybody (the pupils and the teacher) to maintain a personally distant perspective towards the object of teaching, in case he or she wishes to do so.

In summary, it can be said that the syllabus *Religion und Kultur* is still phrased like a syllabus for *religiöser Unterricht*. This is probably due to the fact that all of the authors, who are either members of the College of Education or teachers, are trained in Protestant theology and Christian religious pedagogy. Although they dissociate themselves from dogma-related teaching, they assume that the pupils, as well as all human beings in general, have a "religious life-world" — not unlike classical phenomenologists of religion. In our view, the new challenges of the multireligious situation in a secular society and the intention of state and school authorities to bring up pupils as citizens of this society,

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[26] Cf. p. 3: "Die Inhalte (die Traditionen der Religionen) und die Lebenswelt (und die damit verbundenen Erfahrungen der Jugendlichen) sind aufeinander zu beziehen. Sonst besteht... die Gefahr, dass... ein auf religionskundliche Inhalte beschränkter Unterricht die Jugendlichen in ihren konkreten Fragen und Anliegen nicht erreicht." ("Contents [the religious traditions] and life-world [and related experiences of the young persons] have to be corresponding. Otherwise... there is the risk that an education which is limited to the contents of *Religionskunde* will not get through to the teenagers with their concrete questions and concerns"; our translation).

demand a different type of religious education. A clear distinction between *religiöser Unterricht* (whether related to dogmatics or to the life-world) and *religionskundlicher Unterricht* is necessary. The basic perspectives of these two types of teaching are totally different from each other. The syllabuses of a compulsory *Religion und Kultur-Unterricht* have to start with religious plurality in a secular state, which also includes the option of not identifying oneself with religion at all. Freedom of religion does not only entail the right to choose whether to be religious or not, but also includes the right to be indifferent, which means that nobody may be forced to personally relate to any religious issue. Therefore, the study-of-religions approach, which does not favour any of those positions, should not only be used for teacher training, but also for structuring and organising syllabuses and school pragmatics. This, of course, entails strong efforts from the applied study of religions, which is related to the field of religious education.

5. The Study of Religions and Practical School Teaching: A New Field of Application

In the following section we would like to discuss some possible contributions of the study-of-religions approach to the future development of religious education in its practical aspects, related to the situation in Switzerland and other European countries. To this end, we would like to distinguish the political level from the conceptual one.

5.1. *Political Positioning*

Until now, the study of religions in Switzerland — and also in other European countries like Germany — has hardly taken any political action in the field of religious education, with the exception of advising politicians and implementing standards for teacher training programmes (see chapter 1). Nevertheless, the media often ask scholars of the study of religions to comment on political issues and to recommend political strategies for the further development of religious education in public schools. This is particularly the case in Switzerland. We therefore believe that our discipline has to develop a distinct political position in the field of religious education.

At this point, the authors would like to present their own position. Based on our research and our experience with institutions and persons involved, we suggest that a twofold organisational model is the most appropriate in a multi-religious context. This model, which has partly been put into practice in some of the Swiss cantons, is a combination of the two subjects *religiöser Unterricht* and *Religionskunde*. It allows both, *religionskundlicher Unterricht* as a compulsory subject for all pupils and *religiöser Unterricht* as an optional subject introducing the pupils to a certain religious tradition. Both subjects should be taught in public schools. This double strategy has several advantages.

– Pupils will learn that there are two different ways of speaking about religious items. They, therefore, will have the chance to learn both of these two "languages."
– They will be able to decide where and when it is appropriate to speak about religious items from an insider's point of view and when they should apply an outsider's view, both relating to their own religion (in case they are religiously affiliated) and towards other religions.
– Pupils will also learn how to deal with the tension between these two perspectives.
– If the state is responsible for *Religionskunde* and the religious communities for *religiöser Unterricht*, both sides have a common practical field of institutional communication and relationship.

Possibly, some of the pupils (or their parents), who feel deeply committed to their own religious tradition, may be offended by a *Religionskunde*, because participation is compulsory, contradicting, as they may argue, the positive side of religious freedom. We think this is an important objection, when it refers to the life-world type of religious education. However, when it comes to the subject of *Religionskunde*, a distanced approach towards religious traditions should not be mistaken as somehow being of a "religious" — or a "anti-religious" standpoint. *Religionskunde* does not aim to interfere with the pupils' convictions, but rather to provide them with a basis for discussions *about* religious issues.

5.2. *Some Cornerstones for Teaching* Religionskunde

In the following section, we would like to define some cornerstones of *Religionskunde* from the perspective of the study of religions.

5.2.1. *Conditions of the Organisational Context*

– In order to achieve the abovementioned goals, one has to make a
clear distinction between didactics in *religiöser Unterricht* and in
Religionskunde.
– Furthermore, there has to be a clear-cut differentiation between
the responsible agents of both concepts. The difference is that
Religiöser Unterricht is the concern of the religious communities,
whereas *religionskundlicher Unterricht* is the concern of public
school authorities. *Religiöser Unterricht* has to be conceptualised as
well as taught by representatives of the respective religious com-
munity (or communities) and representatives of the discipline of
reference, which will normally be some kind of theology and/or
religious pedagogy. *Religionskundlicher Unterricht*, on the other
hand, has to be conceptualised by representatives of the secular
state, its main discipline of reference being the study of religions.
Therefore, school teaching should be conducted in a study-of-
religions manner — and not a theological manner.
– The same differentiations also apply to the dimensions of teacher
training, the designing of curricula and syllabuses as well as creat-
ing teaching media.
– These presuppositions do not exclude theologians of Islam, Chris-
tianity etc. from presenting their insider-perspectives in a *religions-
kundlicher Unterricht*. In the same way, representatives of the study
of religions can participate in a confessional training of future
teachers or *religiöser Unterricht* of a certain religious tradition.
However, the responsibilities should be clearly defined, theolo-
gians being responsible for *religiöser Unterricht*, and the scholars of
the study of religions for *Religionskunde*.

5.2.2. *Conceptual Cornerstones*

– The school subject "religion" in the sense of *religionskundlicher
Unterricht* should not be understood as the next developmental
level of *religiöser Unterricht* (as defined in chapter 3.4.). On the
contrary — it has to be conceptualised autonomously. The concept
of *Religionskunde* should start from a point of view which sees
the pupil as a member of secular society. It should not mistake a

multireligious situation in the respective society for individual identity questions or the pupils' supposed religious or spiritual needs.

– In order to provide suitable means for the practical dimensions of a *religionskundlicher Unterricht*, the study-of-religions approach is bound to conceptualise its own didactics *(Fachdidaktik).*

– The conceptual design has to make a clear distinction between objects and the frames of reference or — phrased didactically — the approaches.

– The objects of teaching are elements of religious symbol systems. The responsible school authorities, which represent the respective society at every school level, have to decide which religions and which religious elements they want to be represented. The selection should be based on the question of how to educate pupils as citizens of their country — not as religious individuals or as members of religious communities.

– The approaches to teaching have to derive from methods used by the cultural sciences, elementarised according to the respective school level.

5.3. *The Didactics of* Religionskunde: *Searching for an Appropriate Programme*

As a consequence, the *Religionskunde* form of religious education is in need of a specific didactical concept. Unfortunately, the study of religions has not designed or institutionalised its own didactics yet. This is due to the basic conditions of religious education in most European countries, which until now have not favoured a study-of-religions approach to religious education. In the following paragraph, we will roughly outline a possible concept of applied didactics. This concept is predominantly characterised by German-speaking discourses on didactics, but hopefully it can be seen as a starting point for more intensive discussions in an international context. Referring to the cornerstones, the concept is based on the didactic model of Jank and Meyer, which we consider to be an adequate basis for the development of a *religionskundlicher Unterricht* (Jank and Meyer 2002:30).

Didactics of *Religionskunde*

	(1) Disciplines of Reference:			
	Complementary Historical Disciplines: – Indology – Islamic Studies – Cultural Studies of Christianity and Judaism – etc.	*Core Discipline:* Study of Religions	*Complementary Systematic Sciences* – e.g. Social Sciences	
(2) General Didactics: e.g. Concept of Competence e.g. Concept of Elementarisation	DIDACTICS OF RELIGIONSKUNDE			*(3) General Theories of Development and Socialisation* *Theories of Teaching and Learning:* e.g. Inquiry Learning
	(4) Practical Field Religionskunde/Religionskunskap in Public Schools			

This design refers to the four major fields which are necessary for the development of applied didactics of the study of religions:

(1) It is evident that the central parts have to be provided by its core discipline, the study of religions, supplemented by other academic disciplines which can contribute their specific knowledge concerning certain religious traditions, but also systematic approaches for interpretation.

(2) The didactics of *Religionskunde* has to draw on the same field of general didactics as any other school subject. As a suitable model from general didactics, we recommend the concept of competence,[27] which has already been adopted in several other secular school subjects. For the needs of specific didactics, we suggest to

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[27] Cf. for example: www.kompas.bayern.de [20.10.2007].

develop a concept of elementarisation of approaches and objects of the study of religions.[28]

(3) The third aspect is concerned with different theories of socialisation and development. Didactics of *Religionskunde* should relate these theories (e.g. Hurrelmann 2001) to objects and approaches of the study of religions.[29] In addition to these general theories, specific concepts of teaching and learning have to be taken into consideration. We recommend the approach of Inquiry Learning *(forschendes Lernen)* as it has been developed in the didactics of geography and history (Aepkers and Liebig 2002).

(4) Finally, the practical field has to be taken into account. We therefore advocate the continuation of applied research in the field of religious education in public schools. A close contact between the representatives of *Religionskunde* and those who are responsible for *religiöser Unterricht* will be valuable to clarify the differences, benefits and problems that arise for the pupils, especially if both models of religious education are applied at the same time. Respectively, a close contact with representatives of other school subjects like geography or history may be useful as well.

6. Conclusion

As this article has shown, the study of religions as a scholarly approach has an essential task in analysing, classifying, and criticising existing models of religious education, but also in shaping new concepts according to its own disciplinary standards. Especially new concepts of religious education like *Religion und Kultur* in the Canton of Zurich are in need of new scholarly approaches, particularly on the level of applied research.

As a result of empirical research in public schools, two basic forms of religious education have emerged: *Religiöser Unterricht* and *religions-*

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[28] This kind of elementarisation has already been developed for similar purposes in the field of *religiöser Unterricht*, drawing on theology as its discipline of reference, by German pedagogues of religion like Friedrich Schweitzer and Karl Ernst Nipkow. Cf. Hanisch 2007.

[29] Again, there are analogous approaches in Christian pedagogy of religion, relating theories of socialisation and development to theological topics. E.g. Nestler 2007.

kundlicher Unterricht — treating objects of religious traditions in a religious manner or in the scholarly way of cultural studies. Whereas theologies (or pedagogies of religion) serve as the main disciplines of reference for *religiöser Unterricht* in the context of the respective religious traditions, *Religionskunde* draws on the study of religions as its discipline of reference. As our analysis of the new syllabus of *Religion und Kultur* has shown, the distinction between the two basic forms of religious education does not only refer to the area of school classes, but also to teacher training, creating syllabuses and teaching media. Therefore, the study of religions has to develop its own didactics, comparable to other secular school subjects and their respective disciplines of reference like history or geography. Worked out in this way, *religionskundlicher Unterricht* is not in competition with *religiöser Unterricht*, but provides a general basis for understanding religious issues in a secular society.

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Religious Education in England

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Abstract

This article argues that RE in England is shaped by a number of factors that promote a rigid definition of religiosity and which discourage engagement with new, unconventional or non-mainstream forms of religion. The article identifies the close relationship between RE and the national church and other faith communities as well as a reliance on local agreed syllabi as key characteristics in the inability of RE in England to fully engage with contemporary forms of religion. It ends by calling for a revaluation of the basis for RE and a greater engagement with other disciplines involved in the study of religion.

Keywords

misrepresentation, agreed syllabi, curriculum, religious education, England

The study of religion in English schools is usually carried out in the subject area known as Religious Education (RE) and is an area of intense and passionate discussion by those involved in schools, universities and religious groups. This vibrancy is partly reflected in the preoccupation by specialists in Religious Education with pedagogy and the underlying rationale for the subject. Questions of the rationale and aims for Religious Education, the relationship between educational theory and the nature of religion, the most effective resources and approaches are the most frequently addressed issues in the main subject journals. However, the preoccupation among specialists in Religious Education with the nature and rationale of their subject (Baumfield 2005) obscures a more mundane truth: that the parameters and nature of RE as a subject are established in law and further shaped by a statutory enforced system of

locally agreed guidelines and consultations with representatives from different religious groups.

This article will describe and review the origins of the current legal and educational status of RE in England as well as discuss the significance for the study of religion in schools of a curriculum subject that maintains a unique status in British law. The article will also argue that as a subject it is constrained both by its relationship to the state and the commitment to a particularly narrow understanding of religion embedded in the bodies that determine the local curriculum for RE.

The Origins of Religious Education

Religious Education is in a state of flux. The government recently introduced a non statutory framework for the subject, and there is an ongoing and increasingly earnest discussion about the need to reshape it as a subject that has equal status with all other curriculum areas. However, before the importance of these changes can be assessed, it is useful to consider the origins and development of the subject, as each development has been influenced by the laws, educational context and religious changes that occurred before it.

In England a consistent determinant of the nature and scope of RE has been the established national church, the Church of England. This is partly because the Church of England has often played a pivotal role in the development of English education from its foundations to the present day (Jones 1977), but also because the Church of England has often identified the education of the nation's children as part of its "Christian duty" (Chadwick 2001:475) and has sought to retain control over education for its own interests (Alexander 2000).

It would be difficult to underestimate both the historical and contemporary influence of the Church of England and other Christian denominations over RE. The story of the evolution of British education is one in which the Church of England and its competition with other denominations dominates. However the nature of that domination depends on who is telling the story. At different times the Church of England has not only celebrated its role in the development of a universal system of education, but has attributed the earliest initiatives in

relation to education, especially the education of the poor and under-privileged to the work of the churches (Durham Commission 1970). Some writers argue that not only were the first schools in Britain provided by religious agencies, but in their story of the development of education all other agencies apart from the Churches and state are omitted (Cox 1983).

Other commentators have challenged this interpretation of the growth of British education as a benign myth (Simon 1974). Jones (1977) argues that the unwillingness of the Church of England to relinquish their control of education, and the intensity of their battles with other denominations in this area, as a major factor in the inability of the state to take control of this vital area of education, a lack of control which is still evident in many ways today. Similarly Robin Alexander argues that there was a vibrant educational culture amongst working-class men that was in part subsumed by the Church monopoly on education (Alexander 2000).

Regardless of whether the Church features as a champion or a hindrance in the story of the evolution of British education it's ensuing grip on the future development of RE is indisputable. The continuing importance of education for the Church of England is illustrated by the interdenominational fighting that took place prior to the 1944 Education Act and the assumptions it made about the place of Christianity in society. In many respects the 1944 Act is illustrative of the identification between Church and national education precisely because of what it does not say. The Act assumes that children are raised in Christian families and that parents desire that schools contribute to the Christian nurture of their children. The Act never actually specifies what religion is to be taught or the character of the worship in schools, probably because it was assumed that Christianity was synonymous with religion in post-war Britain (Cox 1983).

The determination of the Church of England to retain control of RE, and the competition between the different churches over the content and significance of Religious Education (Beck 1998), impacted on RE in two ways. The first was that the government distanced itself from Religious Education and handed over major decisions about the nature and content of the subject to local authorities. The creation of Standing Advisory Committees for RE (SACREs) meant that the curriculum

content of RE could be decided locally rather than nationally. It introduced a legal requirement for each area of the country to establish Syllabus Conferences to determine the content of RE in consultation with the Church of England and other churches. The second impact was that the content of RE was assumed not only to be sympathetic to Christianity but the curriculum was focused on Biblical knowledge partly because this was one of the few areas that the different churches could agree on (Brown 2002).

The period between the 1944 Act and 1988 was characterised by the gradual erosion of Christian nurture in schools and the emergence of new approaches to teaching RE that were in part founded on research by Ronald Goldman (1964) and Harold Loukes (1961). Their work suggested that faced with pupil indifference and incomprehension of the content of Religious Instruction, the study of religion in schools needed to become more relevant and accessible. Until the early 1960's the teaching of religion in schools was almost entirely equated with Christian nurture. The rapid decline in church membership, the growth of non Christian religious communities, especially Islam and Hinduism and the popularity of alternative philosophies and expressions of spirituality, meant that it was no longer possible to associate the teaching of religion in schools exclusively with Christian nurture. Inspired by the Birmingham SACRE, other Agreed Syllabi began to recommend the teaching of non-Christian religions and secular lifestyles and spiritualities as authentic expressions of religiosity.

The 1988 Education Reform Act is often cited as the legislation that heralded the birth of modern RE (Cox and Cairns 1989), but in many respects in relation to RE it was the result of a backlash by many Christians to the developments of the 60's and 70's, and it is characteristic of the controversial nature of RE in Britain that the Act in relation to RE is the result of further wrangling between the Church of England the state and other denominations — arguments that were characterised by greater hostility between Christian groups than between any one church and the government (Brown 2002). Again it is the case that in some respects the passion of the churches to control RE meant that in relation to RE the Act is a compromise. This is a compromise that is founded on the recognition that multifaith RE was the norm in many parts of the country, but that many in the Churches were determined

to preserve the privileged position of Christianity in the curriculum. The Act legislated for a national framework for education that established a National Curriculum for all state schools, but RE was excluded from the National Curriculum and its place is guaranteed by the statutory requirements of the 1944 Act that oblige all schools to teach RE. Jackson argues that the compromise itself was located in the requirement of all RE to prioritise the teaching of Christianity over and above other religious traditions:

> With regard to religious education, the essence of the compromise is contained in section 8.3 of the 1988 Education Reform Act which states that new Agreed Syllabuses for religious education must: 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (Jackson 2004:24)

Legal and Curriculum Consequences

The compromise at the heart of contemporary RE has several consequences for the way religion is studied in schools. Superficially the story of RE in Britain appears as a linear progression from confessionalism to neutrality, but the story is more complex (Barnes 2006). The plethora of legislation underpinning the study of religion in schools until the end of compulsory education and the statutory requirement for the content of syllabi to be locally determined and based on the diverse religious character, provides the casual observer with the impression that RE in England is not only clearly defined in law but based on a multifaith approach. However, as many of those actually engaged in the teaching and regulation of RE have found, the law is vague and contradictory and consistently privileges Christianity both at the level of subject content and its status within schools.

The Education Reform Act of 1988, Circular 3/89 and Circular 1/94 establish what may be taught in RE and the way in which local authorities can amend their curriculum. In his summary of the statutory requirements for RE, Alan Brown (2002) provides a wry summary of the state of RE as it is defined in law. The Education Reform Act was informed by debates in the House of Lords that conflated RE and

Sunday school education. It resulted in an agreement that "as long as Christianity was mentioned in such a way that is was given pre-eminence there would be an acceptance of the proposed wording for RE." There was a "fudge" over the wording of RE which has resulted in teacher confusion over the distinction between RE and collective worship. Circular 3/89 was influenced by a "small but influential group" whose aim was to "protect Christianity in the classroom" and to ensure that "Christian and others (those not positively of another faith) had to receive the appropriate dosage of Christianity and a Christianity that was taught as true."

Some RE specialists have questioned the statutory obligation to privilege the teaching of Christianity over other religions as either undermining the academic credibility of RE or as institutionalising the discrimination of all other religions (Grimmitt 2000; Jackson 2004). Despite these concerns the most recent guidance in the form of the NSFRE reiterates the privileging of Christianity in the curriculum, but it seems that the conflation between worship, nurture and the objective study of religion causes great confusion for many teachers of RE in Britain (Brown 1999), and we have yet to resolve this issue.

The Non-statutory Framework for Religious Education

The most recent development in RE, and one of the most frequently discussed issues for RE in Britain, is not its rationale or educational basis but its organisation. The peculiar status of RE as statutory in law but absent from the national curriculum, considered as part of the life of every child's education but with a content that is determined not by educationalists but by members of religious communities, is one that is raised in the context of centralising RE.

The possibility of establishing RE on the same organisational and educational basis as other curriculum subjects has been raised by the Church of England and secular observers. In 1992 the then Archbishop of York, John Habgood in a keynote speech to a conference on RE organised by a Christian charity recommended that RE should become nationally rather than locally determined. Although the government did not accept his proposal, they did develop two national model syllabi for voluntary use in schools.

A variety of factors have culminated, first, in the production of a non-statutory framework for RE and, secondly, in a discussion about the full integration of RE into the national curriculum. The first factor is that the quality of RE in schools and the quality of the agreed syllabi themselves are variable. Many locally agreed syllabi are not comprehensive enough to support quality teaching and learning in RE (QCA 2007), and there is some evidence that agreed syllabi are frequently ignored by schools (Revell 2005). The second factor is that the introduction of Citizenship as a curriculum subject into schools in 1999 has raised concerns for many about the survival of RE as a discrete subject (Teece 1998). John Beck (1998) goes so far as to argue that Citizenship has only been accepted into the curriculum because RE has consistently failed to impact on the moral development of pupils. In the intervening years some of the original concern by RE specialists that Citizenship would edge them out of the timetable have lessened (Watson 2004), but it is still the case that the timetable is very crowded and that RE and Citizenship overlap in significant areas.

It may be that the arrival of Citizenship Education, the creation of a non-statutory framework for RE (NSFRE) and the renewal of the debate to centralise RE is just a coincidence, but it has raised a number of issues about the future of RE. The NSFRE has widespread support from RE specialists, the Churches and other faiths, and in many ways its content is a synthesis of the many different agreed syllabi, but as a document the NSFRE adds very little to the guidance on RE that is offered by existing syllabi. In some areas, especially in relation to the law and its understanding of what constitutes religion it is actually more ambiguous than existing guidelines (Felderhof 2004). The unsatisfactory status of the NSFRE has prompted some to consider the possibility of situating RE in the National Curriculum. In the report *A non-statutory framework for RE: the report of a feasibility study* (Circular 180) the QCA argued that there is a powerful case for a national focus for RE and went on to emphasise the continued role of the churches and faith groups in their advisory capacity. The case for the centralisation of RE seems to be strengthening, but there is an even more interesting question: if RE is reorganised, will it retain the approach to the teaching of religion currently embedded in the agreed syllabi?

The Agreed Syllabi

A full understanding of the way RE is taught and its significance for education is impossible without some discussion of the agreed syllabi. The origins of the agreed syllabi are located in the desire of the state to relocate responsibility for the content of RE to the Church of England and other religious communities. As documents they are written under the auspices of the Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education and are co-authored by local education authorities, local churches, members of other faiths and educationalists. The first agreed syllabi rarely covered religions other than Christianity, and many explicitly outlined their intention that RE should not only be about instruction in Christianity but hopefully conversion as well (Cox 1983). Today the agreed syllabi distance themselves from any kind of religious nurture, but the firm grip that these groups exercise over the different RE syllabi means that as a curriculum subject RE remains entangled with the interests and preoccupations of religious groups themselves.

However, the agreed syllabi influence the way that religion is taught in compulsory education in one other significant respect: the majority are based on a definition of religion that restricts the way that pupils can engage with religions and develop expressions of religiosity in the classroom.

The study of religion can be explored in a variety of disciplines and is shaped and informed by numerous disciplines: anthropology, philosophy, theology, religious studies, psychology and sociology all offer different approaches and questions with which to explore the phenomenon of religion. These approaches to the study of religion do not constitute a coherent definition of the nature or significance of religion, and some have even argued that the word religion is so meaningless that it should be avoided altogether (Hinnells 2005). Yet the perpetual discourses on the nature of religion within so many disciplines provide one consensus: that the debate about the factors that define and constitute religion are a significant factor in their engagement with the phenomena.

An indication of the distance between the academic study of religion and RE in Britain is that it would be hard to find evidence of these broader discourses within RE. Embedded within the majority of agreed

syllabi is a definition of religion that precludes any understanding other than that outlined by the authors. Each SACRE meets every five years to review the existing syllabus and to rewrite. There are 150 SACREs spread across the country, representing vastly different demographic populations ranging from inner city, multi-faith areas to those characterised by rural poverty. In theory the agreed syllabi should reflect a variety of academic approaches to the study of religion. Combined with the choice of pedagogies that could inform the teaching and learning underpinning each syllabi, and the endless permutations of the contributions made by different Christian denominations and religious and ethnic communities in England, the range of RE offered by the agreed syllabi should be endless.

An examination of the agreed syllabi shows that their distinguishing feature is not the range of pedagogies or the way in which they attempt to engage the study of religion in schools with the many different academic disciplines. Rather, the defining feature is the similarity in the way they define the phenomena of religion. Different syllabi focus on particular religions at different stages in the curriculum. While they all devote the majority of time to the teaching of Christianity, some emphasise Judaism or Hinduism, etc. What most share, however, is an implicit assumption that religion can be defined in a certain way. The assumed definition of religion that is imbedded in the agreed syllabi is one that relies on categorisation of religious experiences and behaviour.

A national collection of all agreed syllabi does not exist and at any one time a significant proportion are being rewritten. Some local education authorities put their agreed syllabi on the internet, others adopt the syllabi from another area and still more publish them locally where they are not easily available to any one outside the region. The combination of these factors means that there are difficulties for the researcher who wants to read them all (Bausor and Poole 2003). However, a review of the agreed syllabi that are available shows how similar most of them are. The following are representative examples of how they structure learning in RE.

The Agreed Syllabus for Luton divides religion into 8 strands: writings, worship, people, places, rites and rules, the natural world, self and others, fasts, festivals and celebration. The Dorset Agreed Syllabi uses the following categories: stories, writing, celebrations, worship and rit-

ual, symbols, religious beliefs and ideas, while the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus identifies 6 strands that support pupil understanding of religion: what people believe, what people do, how people express themselves, making sense of who we are, making sense of life and making sense of values and commitments. The Ealing Agreed Syllabus identifies festivals, special books, writings moral teachings and traditions as aspects of religions that pupils should be able to understand.

The use of descriptive categories to approach the study of religion is an established approach within some disciplines and can be identified most closely with the phenomenology of religion. The phenomenology of religion emerged as one of the most significant modern disciplines and approaches to the study of religion in the early twentieth century, and although there are noticeable differences in the nature of phenomenology, there are shared assumptions. The first is that it is an attempt to describe religious experiences and behaviour as accurately as possible through encouraging the outsider to describe and understand the religious phenomena as they appear to the participants themselves (Allen 2005). The second is that observers are asked to "bracket out" their own value judgements or to suspend their own beliefs when they consider religious phenomenon. The third is that a significant part of the process of understanding religion from a phenomenological standpoint means that the experiences and features of the phenomenon in question need to be categorised in order that the general characteristics, structures and patterns associated with religious experiences and behaviour can be understood.

Although the phenomenological model of studying religion is evident in English classrooms today (Grimmitt 2000), its origins lie in the work of Ninian Smart. Smart founded in 1967 the first department in an English university of a "religious studies" that was based upon the multidisciplinary study of religion. He was committed to a model that encouraged empathic awareness as a way of facilitating the objective study of religion and all belief systems, and in "Secular Education and the Logic of Religion," published in 1968, he introduced a six-dimensional typology of religion which identifies six features commonly found in all religions: myths, rituals, social forms, experiences, doctrines and ethics.

Although the extent of Smart's contribution to contemporary RE is a matter of discussion (O'Grady 2005; Barnes 2001), his typology and

approach were rapidly assimilated as the core of RE. The phenomeno-logical approach to the study of religion is evident in the pedagogies and work developed by John Hull in the writing of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus of 1975 and arguably in every agreed syllabi that seeks to structure learning about religion through a list of "Smartian" like categories. Grimmitt (2000) argues that the type of phenomenological RE that is prevalent in English class rooms today bares little relation to the more subtle model that was represented in the Schools Council Working Paper number 36 in 1971. The same could be said of Smart's initial typology and the endless lists at the heart of most agreed syllabi. Smart distinguished between the notion of religion and that of *a religion*. It was not the outward characteristics that determined whether the values, behaviour etc. were religious, but the depth of values involved; for Smart all deeper value questions are religious (Sealey 1982).

This definition of the religious allows a fluid and nuanced under-standing of religiosity; it is an open definition of religion, one that permits the consideration of new ideas and practices as religious. In contrast the approach offered by most of the agreed syllabi is more structured and less open to interpretation, precisely because the catego-ries themselves provide an implicit definition of religion. Using precon-ceived concepts that discourage a dynamic or fluid interpretation of phenomena to engage with religiosity may provide pictures of religion that are tidier but ultimately misleading (Abeysekara 2001). It is the rigidity of these definitions that has several consequences for the way religion is studied in schools.

The first consequence is that religions are often portrayed as cultur-ally and theologically monolithic entities. There are a plethora of writ-ings and research on the diversity of beliefs within religions and the fluidity of belief and practice within different social contexts, yet they do not inform the majority of the Agreed Syllabi or the non-statutory framework for RE. Most agreed syllabi make reference to teaching cer-tain aspects of a religion that are usually characterised by the categories mentioned before. In some areas the agreed syllabus recommends that older pupils at key stage three explore differences, but there are few syl-labi that assume that understanding that diversity within religious tra-ditions is an integral part of understanding them.

This omission means that religions are sometimes portrayed in ways that are not consistent with their actual existence, that is, the way they

are taught in schools does not reflect their practice and composition outside of the classroom. Internal variations and interpretations between denominations and national models are often ignored, and if pupils based their understanding of religious traditions on the way most agreed syllabi structured their learning, they could be forgiven for assuming that cultural, ethnic and regional differences were insignificant or even non existent.

The diversity within religious tradition is well known but not reflected in the agreed syllabi. Eleanor Nesbitt has conducted research in a range of areas that illustrate how religious communities transmit religious practices and beliefs in a way that is infinitely more varied and complex than a simple linear communication between generations (Nesbitt 1997 and 1998). The failure to recognise diversity within religions isn't just limited to religions other than Christianity. Nesbitt (1993) has noted that the Christian tradition in Britain embodies many different ethnicities and interpretations of being Christian, and studies by Michael Hornsby Smith (1989) show that within Catholic communities in this country there are an enormous variety of religious beliefs and practices within single congregations, let alone the global Catholic community. Although the diversity of Christian experiences and beliefs is widely accepted (Nesbitt 1993) most agreed syllabi simply do not reflect the wide range of beliefs and practices within Christianity (Hayward 2006).

Some specialists have developed pedagogies and resources to teach RE in a way that encourages teachers' awareness of cultural differences and diversity within religious traditions. The *Interpretative Approach* developed by Robert Jackson challenges the idea that religions and cultures are homogeneous entities, where the members of different traditions all share the same beliefs or act in the same way. In *Religious Education: An Interpretative Approach*, Jackson argues that religions are not only fluid and changing in their modern state but that the religious and cultural pluralism that characterises British society is an opportunity for educationalists. It is ironic that while the basis for a more subtle and flexible approach to RE exists in a number of areas these are not accommodated within most agreed syllabi.

The significance of culture as a factor that shapes both the form and content of religion is discussed in a variety of approaches to the study of religion, and some have argued that the term religion should be abandoned altogether and the word culture used in its place (Hinnells

2005). Whether this argument is sustainable or not it is an important one in the study of religion because it raises questions about the nature of religious traditions. In his discussion of essentialism and religion Andrew Wright (2002) asks: if culture is such a significant factor in the way religions are formed and lived, is it really possible to talk of an "Islam" or "Christianity" that transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries? This is an important issue for teachers who struggle to provide pupils with an accurate representation of the religions they teach, but not one they can find much guidance for from the agreed syllabi.

It is also the case that the presentation of religious traditions as monolithic entities is far from an innocent process, because the model that is presented can favour one interpretation or denomination over another. Farid Panjwani (2005) argues that the teaching of Islam as it is recommended through many agreed syllabi not only neglects the rich diversity of beliefs and practices that exist within Islam but also favour a Sunni interpretation over a Shiite one. Philip Barnes (2007) makes a similar observation in relation to the teaching of Christianity in his analysis of current thinking in RE. He notes that while there has been a world-wide growth of Pentacostalism in the last 50 years, most agreed syllabi do not acknowledge this fact.

The second consequence of the way that the religions are defined within most agreed syllabi is that religions are assumed to be not only monolithic and essentialised, but unless they demonstrate qualities which are considered acceptable they are often ignored. Religious traditions that exhibit behaviour or beliefs that do not "fit" are ignored or dismissed. This type of misrepresentation of religion has been discussed in several contexts. In his overview of the current discourse on religion Peter Berger (1999) argues that religion constantly evolves and adapts. An integral part of the study of religion is the ability to analyse and decipher these new expressions of religiosity. However, he identifies a trend to label forms of religiosity that do not fit the traditional Western image of religious behaviour as "extremism" or "fundamentalism." He argues that not only is this a politically and intellectually lazy response to religious beliefs and activity that appear not to be part of mainstream or the norm, but it has the effect of establishing a distinction between authentic and inauthentic religion.

Liam Gearon (2002) locates this aspect of the misrepresentation of religion within RE as part of RE's "utopian agenda." He describes a ten-

sion between the desire of educators to present religions in a favourable light and the contribution that some religious groups make to the abuse of human rights. Philip Barnes (2006) argues that not only is there a tension, but that educators actually present religions in certain ways precisely because their aim is to justify religious education in schools as part of an exercise to persuade pupils that all religions are equally valid. Like Gearon, Barnes believes that the origins of this form of misrepresentation in RE can be located in the desire of educators to promote harmony or not to show religions in a "negative" light. Wright (2003), however, notes that this form of benign censorship has the effect of excluding all those religious groups and behaviour that do not accommodate the universal theology from the RE canon.

The third consequence of the way religion is defined in the agreed syllabi is that religious traditions and religiosity itself are presented as if they were static phenomena. The inability of the RE curriculum to encompass new global and national developments in religious activity is partly structured by the rigid definition of religion perpetuated within the Agreed Syllabi and the Non Statutory Framework for RE. Although these documents profess a commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in relation to religion, in effect their definition of religion is exclusive and monolithic. Between the prescription of 6 world religions and the implicit definition of religiosity given by the endless lists of "themes," "concepts" or "strands," there is really no room in the RE curriculum to consider forms of religion that differ from the norm as it is defined within the agreed syllabi and the non statutory framework for RE.

One of the most noticeable features about the development of trends within RE since the 1980s is how little has changed. There have been some developments, there is a new interest in "Green" issues and a preoccupation with the environment that ranges across many curriculum subjects outside of RE. The use of language and pictures in textbooks is more sensitive to the wishes of religious communities, but the overwhelming feature is similarity and continuity. One reflection of its static nature since the 1960s is the fact that most agreed syllabi are still wedded to the notion of six world religions. The study of religion within RE typically assumes that there are six world religions and that the study of these religions should make up the substance of pupil learning. The rationale for focusing on the six world religions is rarely included in the agreed syllabi; there is merely an unquestioning repetition of the

fact that there are six world religions and that they are significant. Some agreed syllabi, like the Agreed Syllabus for Luton stipulate that if other world faiths are present within schools, they should be included within the curriculum, but for the main part teachers are invited to choose between the six world religions within the boundaries set by their agreed syllabi.

While most agreed syllabi choose to ignore other significant expressions of religiosity like animism, ancestor worship, Confucianism or Shamanism, they have also remained inured to the debates on the construction of religions and religious identities as part of the relationship between the West and its neighbours (Masuzawa 2005). The interrogation of religious traditions and the way we perceive them has become a significant discourse in the study of religion, yet this evolving academic landscape is as excluded from RE as the changing national and international landscape of which it is a part.

Similarly, while the national and global religious landscape has altered significantly, there is little evidence of this in the agreed syllabi. An example of this is the way Islam is presented in official documents. Islam has undergone several transformations both nationally and globally. The Muslim world is more culturally and ethnically diverse than it was a generation ago, but more importantly it is a religion which is now intensely politicised in a variety of international arenas. At a national level Islam has grown, and Islam is often associated with national discussions about British identity, free speech, censorship, women's rights and terrorism and extremism and the limits of toleration. Agreed syllabi are rewritten every five years, yet there are no obvious references to the altered status of Islam in Britain in any of the most recently published agreed syllabi.

Perhaps the most striking example of the way in which the agreed syllabi do not reflect the dynamic nature of religion is in the teaching of Christianity. When the first agreed syllabi were introduced within compulsory education, Christianity was equated with religion. Today most Christian communities are in decline. Even a cursory overview of recent demographic factors in relation to commitment to Christianity indicate that decline is a significant factor in the character of Western Christianity (Davie 1999; Bruce 2001). The decline in membership is matched in the shrinking influence of Christianity in public life as well

as the changing character of Christian belief (Gill 2004). While all these issues inform the discussion of Christianity in other disciplines, in RE Christianity is presented in a way that suggest that very little has changed in the post-war period.

Another area where changing religious landscape is not reflected in RE is in the changing nature of religiosity itself. In the West the rise of new religious movements, cults and sects has occupied the imagination of many interested in the most recent manifestations of religious activity. Although the numbers involved in these groups may be small compared with the numbers associated with traditional organised religions, there is awareness that their impact and significance goes far beyond their small membership (Barker 1999). Within RE there has been no significant engagement with these developments. Despite the awareness that many young people may have of these new forms of religion, and the questions they might legitimately wish to raise as a result of this, there is no reference in the NSFRE or most agreed syllabi to these new forms of religion.

A related area of religiosity that is marginalised in the agreed syllabi and the NSFRE are those expressions of religiosity usually refereed to as New Age or post-modern. These are not movements or sometimes even recognisable as distinct groups or communities. Instead they can more properly be described as an amorphous body of practices and beliefs, sometimes individual, sometimes shared, which often centre on the self. The discussion of these trends in relation to religion, and the question of what it means to be religious, are integral to a number of disciplines that approach the study of religion including, theology, sociology and anthropology. There is no consensus within disciplines, let alone between them, about the nature, extent or significance of postmodernism and religion, but there does seem to be a consensus that the discussion about the changing nature of modern religion is an important question for all those who want to engage with religion in the contemporary world (Hunt 2005). Even those sociologists of religion like Steve Bruce who argue that New Age practices and beliefs are insignificant in relation to the influence of mainstream religions still accept that it is a development that should be addressed (Bruce 2002).

There is no consensus about the nature of postmodernity in any field, let alone in the study of religion. Nor is there a shared understanding of

the significance of new forms of religiosity, their nature or even the existence of religions, beliefs, spiritualities that can be considered qualitatively new. An analysis that the beliefs and practices associated with the new age and postmodernity are not as significant as those associated with traditional organised religion may be right, but this in itself does not diminish the need for young people to engage in the discussion that surround their presence. The individualised, sometimes incoherent beliefs of individuals that are prone to change and fluctuation, and which by their very definition are less structured or part of a coherent or codified body of beliefs and behaviour, may be hard to grasp in the classroom, but pupils should still be able to engage with these ideas as part of their RE.

There is a body of evidence and analysis that suggests that the sacred in a variety of forms still exists in the West despite the decline of organised religion (Wade 1999; Heelas and Woodhead 2005). Within RE there have been a number of research projects investigating the beliefs and attitudes of children that indicate that the landscape is hardly secular (Hay and Nye 1998; Erricker 2000). Investigations of children's spirituality or beliefs in religion make different conclusions about the nature of their beliefs, but there is a broad body of opinion that despite not belonging to an organised religion many children, like adults, do have some form of religiosity.

It is this last point that raises one of the most important questions about the impact of the agreed syllabi on the way pupils engage with religion in schools. Most agreed syllabi and the Non Statutory Framework for RE state that one of the purposes of RE is the development of children's own beliefs and values. Most documentation argues that pupil engagement with religious beliefs and practices and moral codes will allow them to understand the beliefs of others and to realise their own beliefs, and some agreed syllabus and the NSFRE go further by stating that as a result of RE pupils should be able to rationalise their own response to religion and their own beliefs.

If this really is the case, the exclusion of the religious beliefs and practices associated with the new age or postmodernity means that pupils are denied the opportunity to consider beliefs that already exist in society. More importantly, this exclusion means that beliefs and values which they might hold themselves and which they consider religious or

sacred are omitted from the curriculum. One consequence of the definition of religion prescribed by the agreed syllabuses and the NSFRE is that it implicitly delegitimises all forms of religiosity that do not fit. This process applies not just to expressions of religion that are deemed to be too extreme or fundamental to suit the mainstream but also those which are not recognised in any form.

In her critique of the way pupil's situate their own sense of religious identity within a curriculum where religious experiences are defined by their relationship with a traditional religious community, Linda Rudge (1998) argues that those who do not belong are justified in feeling excluded. She believes that the way the curriculum is structured within RE implicitly excludes the "silent majority." This means the pupils are not only denied the opportunity to explore beliefs that are present within society but they would be accurate in believing that the RE curriculum is one that does not value or recognise their beliefs as legitimate religious beliefs. The current definition of religion within English education presents organised religions as the norm, a view that may run counter to the experiences of pupils and which suggest that their own beliefs are possibly abnormal.

This omission poses similar problems for the RE teacher. If teachers of RE are bound to a framework based on categories that do not acknowledge the existence of alternative expressions of religiosity, or diversity of scared experiences, how are we then to comprehend the experiences of our pupils? Most practitioners would accept that teachers should recognise the breadth of pupil belief and responses to religions within RE, but this hardly seems possible when the curriculum itself ignores those beliefs.

Conclusion: The Challenge for Initial Teacher Training

The curriculum as it stands fails to represent religions accurately, and it is too narrow in its scope to allow pupils to embrace the richness of contemporary religious life either as students or as part of their own exploration in this area. One criticism of this analysis is that the agreed syllabi can be used in a way that facilitates a far more subtle and complex study of religion in schools than the one described in this article.

In his discussion of the relationship between phenomenology and pedagogy, Andrew Wright argues that it is unfair to suggest that religious education is reduced to a narrowly descriptive process where pupils are invited only to list, label and classify religious phenomena according to some preconceived typology (Wright 2003). But it is not the typologies themselves which restrict the learning but the fact that the typologies are allowed to define the nature of religiosity.

Most agreed syllabi recommend a range of skills, questions and attitudes that can be used by the teacher to broaden the approaches to the study of religion, but there are several factors which make this unlikely. The first is that this process would demand a far higher level of subject specialism and understanding of pedagogy than currently exists even at secondary level. Consecutive reports by OFSTED report that teaching in RE is often superficial and teachers are unconfident about subject knowledge (OFSTED 2004/05 and 2007). It is unlikely that in many cases the current level of training for teachers would equip them with an understanding of religion that would enable them to go beyond the boundaries of the agreed syllabi, a problem exacerbated by the shortage of specialists RE teachers (OFSTED 2004/2005).

The second factor is that although there is no substantial research into the relationship between the agreed syllabi and the overall study of religion in schools, there is growing evidence, particularly in relation to Christianity (Heywood 2006) and Islam (Panjwani 2005), that the agreed syllabi do not currently support the study of religion that reflects the diversity and contradictions inherent in most religious traditions. The absence of a collection of all agreed syllabi means that it is impossible for the researcher to argue that no agreed syllabus meets these demands, but on the evidence that exists it seems unlikely.

The final criticism of the argument against the understanding of religion presented in the agreed syllabi is that it would be unrealistic in a crowded curriculum to expect schools to find the time and teachers the subject knowledge to go beyond the limitations of the agreed syllabi. When RE is inspected by the government in schools, the reports have noted that there is a tendency for teachers to lack depth in their teaching and that some teaching is superficial (OFSTED 2004/05). Research in a number of areas suggests that the problem is especially bad in the primary phases, where the subject knowledge of prospective teachers is

likely to be minimal and where their training does not address their weaknesses (McCreery 2005; Revell 2005).

Surely it is not acceptable for educationalists and those engaged in the study of religion to allow the present situation to continue because a solution seems too daunting. Any change informed by the arguments in this article would involve a review of the way we train teachers, a reconsideration of the curriculum and perhaps a change in the current partnership between churches and religious communities and schools. Before we reject the task because it is too large we should remember that a teacher who understands how forces outside the classroom, politics, philosophy, educational change, cultural change affect RE is in a position to teach their subject more effectively and with greater clarity (Buchanan 2005), and schools and teacher educators have a responsibility to support teachers reaching this position. The recognition of diversity within religious traditions, New Age practices and beliefs and contemporary forms of religious expression as part of a modern RE syllabus would indicate a qualitatively new shift in the way that religion is understood and defined within education. However it would also mean that instead of relying on a typology of religiosity that was developed over a generation ago, teachers could engage their pupils in questions based on contemporary issues and developments in relation to what it means to be religious in the twenty-first century.

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Teaching Religion in Australian Schools

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Abstract

Traditionally the teaching of religion in schools in Australia was confined to Church-sponsored or independent schools because public education in Australia prided itself on being "free, secular and compulsory." For over one hundred years, the teaching of religion in church schools was grounded in a faith-forming approach but, in the 1980s, there was a shift to an educational approach to teaching of religion. The development of educational approaches enabled the introduction of *Studies of Religion* for senior secondary school students. After considering these shifts, suggestions will be made for some dynamic teaching approaches for students in *Studies in Religion*.

Introduction

Australia and Australians have an interesting relationship with religion and with the teaching of religion in schools. In December 1872, ninety years after white settlement, the Victorian State parliament was the first in a British colony to pass a law which provided free, compulsory and secular schooling for all children. In New South Wales, the 1880 State Public Instruction Act stated that all teaching should be "secular instruction" but also indicated that "general religious" teaching could take place as long as it was free from dogmatical or polemical theology. The Act decreed that during each school day:

> … children will spend four hours devoted to secular instruction and not more than one hour shall be set apart when children may be instructed by a clergyman

or other religious teacher… and in all cases the pupils who receive religious instruction shall be separated from the other pupils of the school. (New South Wales State Government 1880).

It is interesting that the Act provided opportunity for students to study religion but the Catholic Church objected to education being controlled by secular authorities and therefore continued to establish separate schools where the teaching of religion was carried out using a confessional approach according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Archbishop Vaughan of Sydney, in an effort to deter Catholic parents from sending their children to Public schools, condemned the "principle of secularist education" saying that public schools were "seedplots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness" (Fogarty 1959:250). The Act perpetuated the separation of government (public) schools from church (independent) schools and virtually terminated the general teaching of religion in public schools.

This paper comments on the teaching of religion in Australian schools and in particular traces the shift in teaching styles from enfaithing approaches to educational approaches (Lovat 2002). It looks at the development of *Study of Religion* courses in the senior years of secondary schools and the growing popularity of such courses. It offers some critique of current practice in the area of *Study of Religion* in schools and suggests ways of taking the subject forward.

Teaching Religion in Australian Schools

Public schools in Australia are secular and therefore religious education is not part of the formal school curriculum at either primary or secondary school level. Nevertheless, every State and Territory in Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory) has the provision for confessional religious instruction on a weekly basis. Confessional religious instruction may occur in a public school if a religious tradition or denomination is able to provide people to teach the weekly lesson. In most instances, ministers of religion or their accredited representatives are the only people approved to enter the school to provide confessional religious education classes. The con-

fessional instructors are volunteers from the home religious tradition and, on the whole, have no formal qualifications in religion or education. In some schools a "cooperative" program, which is Christian in nature, and designed in such a way that Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Church students are able to participate together is provided, rather than denominational religious education. Students attend religious education classes only if their parent or guardian has provided written permission for them to do so. Students who have been withdrawn from all religious instruction are supervised by school teachers in a separate location during the religious education time which is usually between thirty to sixty minutes per week.

Specific guidelines developed in each State for the provision of confessional religious education in public schools share the following principles:

- programs run by religious organisations must have approval of school associations;
- parents must be fully informed, and give their permission for their child to attend any religious instruction; and
- organisations applying to provide religious instruction must be treated fairly and equitably.

In some, but not all States, confessional religious instruction programs must be compliant with the principles established by the State authority. In Tasmania, for example, the following principles apply:

- Religious instruction programs will be compatible with the codes and practices of the school and the framework of values and purposes on which the school curriculum is based.
- The application and approval process for religious instruction programs will be non-discriminatory and equitably applied to all religions and denominations.
- Religious instruction programs in schools will respect and recognise the diversity of individuals' beliefs.
- Religious instruction programs will be non-discriminatory.
- Whilst providers of religious instruction programs may convey personal beliefs, they will not proselytise.

The content and delivery of confessional religious education programs may be assessed by the school principal who will determine whether the content of the program, and the learning and teaching approaches used to deliver it are consistent with, and supportive of:

- the values and purposes underpinning the school curriculum framework;
- learning, teaching and assessment principles which guide the practice of teachers and students;
- commonly agreed pedagogical approaches used in the school;
- the codes and practices which guide the actions of the school community; and
- appropriate developmental expectations for students of various age groups.

The principal also makes an assessment as to whether or not delivery of the program is possible within the organisational and management resources of the school and therefore confessional religious education may not always take place on a weekly basis but may, for example, occur on one day per school term. If no provision of lessons in a particular faith is currently available, parents are able to discuss with the school principal the involvement of that faith in the school's religious education program. This is conditional on the faith being an approved provider of religious education.

In Queensland, an additional provision is made for Bible lessons. The principal of a primary school may arrange for a period of up to one half-hour per week for religious instruction in selected Bible lessons. The instruction is to be delivered by the classroom teacher but is not to include any "teaching in the distinctive tenets or doctrine of any religious denomination, society or sect" but does not preclude explanation or background information (Queensland Government 2006). Very few public schools in Queensland have implemented the Bible lessons program.

A recent development in public schools in Australia has been the Federal government offer to fund Chaplains for schools under the *National School Chaplaincy Program* that intends to assist schools and communities to support the spiritual wellbeing of their students. Such support may include guidance about ethics, values, relationships, spir-

ituality and religious issues; the provision of pastoral care; and enhancing engagement with the broader community. Under the program the Federal government has provided $30 million per year for three years from 2007. Both public and independent schools are able to apply for up to $20,000 per annum to establish chaplaincy services or to enhance existing chaplaincy services. Many of the school chaplains coordinate and teach religious education in the denominational religious education program at the school. While some school chaplains may be qualified general teachers, there is no minimum education standard required to be accredited as a chaplain, nor is there any stipulation about qualifications in religion studies or religious education: the chaplain needs only to be endorsed by an accepted religious institution. In Queensland, chaplaincy in schools is administered by Scripture Union, an evangelical Christian organisation. Scripture Union, in conjunction with the local church community, appoint the chaplain and provide limited on-the-job training sessions for chaplains. Chaplains are expected to provide "general religious, personal advice, comfort and support to all students and staff, regardless of their religious denomination, irrespective of their religious beliefs" (Australian Government 2007). School chaplains cannot provide services for which they are not qualified, for example, formal psychological assessments, or medical assessments or referrals. The irony is that while the qualifications are low, the job description includes: supporting students to explore their spirituality; providing guidance on religious, values and ethical matters; and facilitating access to the helping agencies in the community, both church-based and secular. There have been instances where some evangelical Christian school chaplains have not appreciated the diverse multi-faith nature of contemporary Australian society and attempts at proselytisation have had to be countered.

Non-government School Religious Education

Religiously-based schools, which constitute the majority of the non-government (private or independent) school sector, have always offered some form of religious education to their students. A catechetical or faith-forming approach was used for teaching religion in religious schools from the 1880s. Development and research in the area of

religious education has predominantly been led by educators from the Catholic system which overall is the second largest provider of education in Australia after government schools and their work dominates the following discussion.

Much discussion of religious education in the past fifty years has centred around the term, nature and function of "religious education" as it occurs in settings as diverse as churches, youth groups, Bible study groups and school classrooms. Over this time, the activity of religious instruction in classrooms has carried various names from Catechism, Catechetics, Religious Instruction, Religious Knowledge, Christian Knowledge, Theology, Divinity, Christian Living to Religious Education. Rummery indicated the importance of language when he said that:

> … if it is accepted that changes in language are often a reflection of a changed way of viewing something, then I suggest that there is strong evidence that Catholics may be at a very important stage of evaluating their position as regards religious education. (Rummery 1975a:150)

More recently, Rummery has said that it is possible to trace the development of the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in the English-speaking world by paying attention to the changes in terminology for such teaching over the past fifty years. He identifies a clear shift

> from a mainly doctrinal content orientation by means of an instructional model, based almost exclusively on the catechism, to a greater use of the Bible and a much greater emphasis on how Catholic faith is to be lived. (Rummery 2001:6)

He also notes a

> growing distance between the original instructional model and a more broadly based educational approach which is less prescriptive, more aware of different personal and/or family options with regard to the way the Catholic faith is being lived, more of an invitation to personal commitment through a variety of practices and activities. (Rummery 2001:6–7)

In the compulsory religious education classroom, a shift from using faith-forming, catechetical approaches to using educational approaches has taken place over the past fifty years.

There have been many attempts to categorise the variety of approaches to religious education in Australia. Rummery identifies three approaches: the Traditional Approach, the Kerygmatic Approach and the Anthropological Approach (Rummery 1975b). Lovat identifies three models under which he categorises various approaches: the first, the Specific or Faith-forming Model, incorporates the prescriptive forms of religious education including life-centred approaches and the Praxis approach to religious education; the second, the Inter-faith Model, incorporates historical, psychological, sociological, phenomenological approaches and typological approaches; a third model, integrates the positive elements of typology and praxis approaches into the so-called Critical Model (Lovat 1989). While all of the above classifications are useful means of describing the teaching approaches and intended student response, many of them overlap. In the following section, two broad categories, faith-forming or catechetical and education models, will be used to describe developments in religious education in Australia over the past fifty years.

Faith-Forming or Catechetical Models

Faith-forming or Catechetical models generally involve a community of believers and aim to help people grow in their faith. The strong emphasis placed on sharing and development of faith presumes that the students concerned are willing participants in the catechetical process. In religiously based schools, faith-forming approaches to religious education have been, and in some instances are still being, used.

From the mid 1960s the work of Josef Jungmann and Johannes Hofinger known as the kerygmatic movement shifted the emphasis from method to content and attempted to recapture the spirit and vision of the Church of the apostolic and patristic eras. Hofinger's teaching method comprised a three-stage process involving presentation, explanation and application. His training programs for teachers reflected the traditional theoretical focus and concentrated on the study of Christian doctrine, Bible, liturgy and the personal development of the teacher through spiritual formation, character training and social behaviour emphasising Christian witness. While teachers of kerygmatic catechesis were more aware of teaching and learning processes than

many traditionalists, they nevertheless maintained traditional theological points of view with respect to theory and practice and emphasised the working of the Holy Spirit through the teacher. The transmissive function of teaching was not just a stereotyped rehearsal of doctrinal codes and rote memory, as in the traditional approach, but included a spiritual dimension in religious educational aims, such as bringing about an "encounter with the Lord." Although interest in the individual pupil was illustrated in the literature by use of terms like "the child" and "the student," individual differences of students were often overlooked (Goldburg 2001).

The kerygmatic approach, according to Rummery moved from a "teaching that" and "learning that" model to a proclamation model (Rummery 1975b). Kerygmatic catechesis also looked beyond the school-oriented view of catechesis and recognised home, school and parish as complementary environmental components which contribute to religious education (Burgess 1975). The major change as far as Catholics were concerned was in developing a more profound understanding of the history of salvation and the rediscovery of the Bible.

My Way to God, a series of textbooks based on kerygmatic principles was developed by a number of Australian catechists for use in the first four years of school. In September 1962, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Education prescribed their use in all Catholic schools. The student books contained songs and colourful graphics as well as biblical references. The accompanying teachers' texts encouraged the use of imagination and a variety of teaching strategies. Opportunities were provided for teachers to engage with the new approach by offering them conferences and workshops. Despite the advances in presentation and suggested method, the series was not so far removed from a catechism approach.

The Anthropological Approach

The anthropological or life-centred approach to religious education, which took real situations of people as its starting point, was the next attempt to enliven the teaching of religion and was being used in many schools by the early 1970s. This phase in religious education was influenced by the growing popularity of psychology and the social sci-

ences as well as the widening gap between rich and poor in the world. The life-centred movement did not replace the insights of the kerygmatic phase, but complemented it with an emphasis on the here and now. While still maintaining the basic goal and purpose of catechesis, namely church maintenance, it "continued the perception of the Catholic school as the foundation stone or nursery of the Catholic Church in Australia" (Ryan 1997:63). Instead of catechism or kerygmatic pronouncements, it was hoped to achieve the same goals by focusing on the personal development and affirmation of students.

In order to focus on the life experience of the students, the use of a diversity of teaching sources and materials such as audiovisuals, newspapers and magazines was encouraged. Some schools even changed the physical set-up of their religious education classrooms. Often, religious education was taught in a different section of the school in a space that was "neutral" where there were no desks, chairs or textbooks; instead there were beanbags, and possibly even burning incense. This changed environment was intended to create an atmosphere in which discussion and sharing could take place freely. An adverse effect of the changed classroom environment was that it set religious education apart from the ordinary curriculum and made it less of an academic subject. The emphasis moved away from the teacher as the one with authority, and shifted to an emphasis on shared experiences rather than instructional teaching. Teachers often worked with groups of students in even less formal situations such as camps or weekend retreats.

According to Lovat, life-centred catechesis brought the worlds of Catholic and Protestant religious educators closer together (Lovat 1989). One of the pioneers of the movement, Ronald Goldman, was of the opinion that religion was a way of life and not a series of facts to be learned by heart. Primarily, Goldman's concern was educational: He rejected the objectives model or training side of education in favour of a more inductive style. He believed that the "basis of children's needs must be the starting point and the ultimate purpose" of religious education (Goldman 1965:65). Religion in this schema was "a personal search, a personal experience and personal challenge" and should stem wherever possible from "the natural interests and activities of children" (Goldman 1965:65). Convinced that religion was bound up with every subject taught in school, he stated that it "cannot be segregated into one particular series of lessons in the timetable" (Goldman 1965:66).

His personal religious stance led him to believe that religion does not have its own subject matter but, ultimately, is intrinsic to every subject taught. The religiousness of life was the centre of his teaching so students were given opportunities to select, explore and experience topics that seemed relevant to them. His process model encouraged flexibility in goal setting and content and initiated broad evaluation strategies.

Another influence on Australian religious education came from the British educator Michael Grimmitt who argued for a form of religious education which focused on human experience. Grimmitt stressed the affective aspects of religious education stating "it is the 'implicit' or feeling side of religion which provides the basis and justification for the existence of 'religious' as opposed to other types of concepts" (Grimmitt 1978:93). According to Grimmitt, the concerns and questions of life should make up the subject matter of religion and students should be allowed to explore these questions at their own pace and in their own way. For both Grimmitt and Goldman, the teacher was primarily a point of reference who created an atmosphere in which dialogue and reflection could take place.

By the late 1970s, many teachers were disillusioned with the anthropological or life-centred approach. Its strength was also its weakness: While beginning with human experience, it relied too heavily on discussion and failed to move forward; in fact in most cases, it lacked academic rigour. In commenting on the approach, Lovat states:

> it appears likely that life-centred RE was built on an unbalanced reaction to the fairly narrow educational procedure of the era preceding it. While Prescriptive RE was all technical, Life-centred RE attempted to be all interpretive ... in this sense both are equally educationally unsound and incomplete. (Lovat 1989:25–26)

Apart from its educational problems, life-centred catechesis might have given the impression of freedom reducing the traditional distance automatically created by the classroom environment; in fact, it exerted implicit control over the student, particularly in the area of attitudes towards religion and was firmly bound by catechetical ideas and practices. Students were observed and judged subjectively on opinions offered rather than on their knowledge of the subject or the processes involved in the teaching of the subject. Life-centred catechesis invited teachers to see themselves on a journey of faith with their students but, in the process, the language of the classroom teacher moved closer to

that of personal counsellor. Lovat notes that when life-centred religious education did move beyond the personal reflections of the students, it nevertheless remained within one religious tradition: There was no investigation of the growing multi-faith nature of Australia (Lovat 1989).

The Shared Christian Praxis Approach

One approach which became popular in Australia during the 1980s and which is still used by at least one-third of the Catholic schools is Thomas Groome's *Shared Christian Praxis Approach.*

In developing the Praxis approach, Groome was strongly influenced by the works of Habermas, Fowler, Piaget, Kohlberg, Dewey and Huebner as well as by liberation theology, feminist theology and the theologies of Latin America. The ideas of educationist Paulo Freire and the social teachings of the Catholic Church have also influenced his writings. Groome built into his educational methodology critique of the Catholic Church, its members and its structures. His aim in developing the Praxis approach was to provide a more authentic form of catechesis or faith nurturing.

The Praxis approach shares with other similar catechetical approaches the dual purpose of conserving the traditions of the Church and of liberating the world by inviting participants to challenge and change the social conditions of their world. Groome is proposing catechesis as forming, informing and transforming. Groome expects the teacher to persuade students about the validity of the Christian tradition. He thinks that persuasion has been ignored in modern discussion of education. According to Groome:

> (Shared Christian Praxis should) touch people's hearts, form their values, persuade their wills, shape their identities, bring them to worship, and so on. These aspects are not honored by a dispassionate 'take it or leave it' access to the tradition but by an affect-laden and persuasive one. (Groome 1991:243)

Groome proposes that religious educators should reclaim the ancient tradition of rhetoric practised by people like Augustine, who believed that teaching was closely aligned to persuasion. Despite what Groome writes, it would appear that the persuasion he has in mind is persuasion to the official church position on issues.

His framework is built on what he called a present dialectical herme-neutics which he claimed would achieve a balance between the past knowledge of the tradition and present experience. The Praxis approach is organised around five movements, which Lovat says have distinct similarities to Action Research phases (Lovat 1989). Groome labels the five movements as Present Action, Dialogue, The Story, The Vision and the Present Dialectical Hermeneutics (Groome 1980).

A brief description of Groome's five movements is offered. Each unit begins with a particular focusing activity in which participants are invited to organise their thoughts and responses in relation to a shared point of reflection which may be a poem, prayer, popular song or some other overt activity. In the first movement, Present Action, the partici-pants are invited to talk about and name their own thoughts or under-standing about the topic being considered (Groome 1980). "It includes what the participants are doing physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually as they live on personal, interpersonal and social levels" (Groome 1980:184). According to Groome, "it encompasses any kind of human activity beyond the inevitable metabolic activity of our bod-ies" (Groome 1980:184).

> The intent of movement one is to enable participants to name or express an aspect of their own and/or their society's present praxis, and this is typically done around a generative theme brought into focus with the opening activity. (Groome 1991:175).

This is not seen as a time for expressing ideas or theories about the topic but for describing one's own praxis or reflection on life which may be expressed in drawing, dancing or words.

The second movement, Critical Reflection, is the beginning of the critical reflection process and invites participants to reflect on why they do what they do, and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are. As a deepening of the reflective moment, it involves critical analysis and deeper discernment. It calls upon "critical reason to evalu-ate the present, critical memory to uncover the past in the present and creative imagination to envision the future in the present" (Groome 1980:185). The movement helps to raise participants' consciousness, social conditions, norms and assumptions. It can be achieved by using critical memory to uncover the history behind actions. It also entails

the use of imagination and envisioning and often releases dialogue that was previously repressed.

The third movement, Story and its Vision, requires the teacher or leader to make present to the group the Christian Community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites. Groome describes this as "the most obviously catechetical movement in the process. It is the 'echoing,' the handing down of what has come to us over our past pilgrimage" (Groome 1980:214). He believes that within the traditions of the Christian community, there is a storehouse of information relevant for contemporary Christians which presents aspects of the faith tradition and provides a vision of how to live. He encourages teachers/leaders to "appropriate the Story critically within the present experience, reclaim it, add to it with creative words and in that sense 'change' it" (Groome 1980:194). Groome wants to make the Christian tradition accessible to people and so urges teachers and leaders to tell stories about the way the tradition has evolved. One key condition is that teachers or leaders "must never make their version of the community Story/Vision sound like the fullness and final statement of the 'truth'" (Groome 1980:215). He suggests that a dialogical style of teaching be used in movement three:

> The nature and purpose of movement three lends special exigency to the educator abandoning the traditional image of teacher as answer-person, as one with 'epistemic privilege' who controls the 'knowledge'. It invites teachers to see themselves, instead, as co-learners who render the service of seeing to it that the Stories and Vision of the faith community are accessible in ways appropriate to the tradition and adequate to the lives of the participants. (Groome 1991:246)

In the fourth movement, Dialectic between Story and Stories, participants are invited to appropriate the story to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories: a means of bringing into relationship the story and vision of the faith community with participants' stories, experiences and reflections.

> The fourth movement is a critique of the Story in light of the stories and a critique of the participants' present stories in light of the past Story.... in essence the fourth movement asks, What does the community's Story mean for (affirm, call in question, invite beyond) our stories, and how do our stories respond to (affirm, recognise limits of, push beyond) the community Story? (Groome 1980:217)

Movement four provides "occasions for participants to bring the 'Praxis' and the 'Christian' components of the approach into an explicitly 'shared' relationship" (Groome 1991:251). The intention is for the participants to make the faith their own. According to Groome, there will be times of affirmation as well as of negation, times when the story confronts and calls people into question and also times of calling participants forward. It is a time of dialogue that invites people to think for themselves, to extend their thoughts to include others as well as the story and vision of the faith community and God. Groome also acknowledges that this may be the most challenging of the movements of Shared Praxis to implement, because the dialogue of the movement has two aspects: between each participant's own story/vision and Christian Story/Vision, and between each participant and the whole group. The fourth movement is a crucial moment of transition from the encounter with Story/Vision in movement three to the choosing of praxis-like decisions and responses in movement five.

The final movement, dialectic between Vision and visions, provides an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future:

> The intention of the fifth movement is to critique the vision embodied in our present action in the light of the Vision of God's Kingdom and to decide on future action that will be an appropriate response to the Vision.... it is an opportunity for the individual and the group to choose a faith response, a Christian praxis, in light of all that has gone before. (Groome 1980:220)

For Groome, true education happens when participants decide on an action. As he says, "religious education should invite people to decision" (Groome 1980:222). Movement five not only gives participants an explicit opportunity to make particular praxis-like decisions but also aims "to form them in the habit of making decisions conceptually and morally appropriate to Christian faith" (Groome 1991:267). The lived response which is chosen may include a new recognition or understanding but, more likely, it will be an action to be carried out or an issue to be explored by the praxis group.

Both Lovat and Welbourne commend Groome's approach, which Welbourne describes as "a significant milestone in religious education" (Welbourne 1997:1), and Lovat judges as "the most comprehensive weldings of religious education to contemporary thinking ever made in

the English-speaking world" (Lovat 1995:183). Nevertheless, Lovat wonders whether there is something "implicit in the third movement which does some violence to Groome's quest for critical education" (Lovat 1989:41). Lovat further criticises Groome's expanded 1991 version stating

> (Groome) does not appear to have redressed what I hold to be crucial weaknesses in his claim to be a genuine critical theorist, and so to have provided an authentic version of critical theory in his religious education model. (Lovat 1995:184)

In Lovat's opinion, Groome does not leave sufficient room in this movement for genuine critical appraisal of the inspirational story. Groome insists that God's word is found in the Christian story but Lovat interprets Groome's stance as an assertion of faith rather than a provision for dialogue and discussion. The movement's foundation is built on two assumptions: The first is to do with God's word being found in the Christian story and the second is that people know the Christian story. While assumption of familiarity with the Christian story may be appropriate within the context of a Christian community, it is not an assumption that can be made about students in religious education classrooms in Australia today. Even though Groome emphasises that the model of Praxis is only appropriate within a Christian faith community, many teachers have imported his vision and model into religious education programs in schools. One might well question whether a school or religious education classroom in contemporary, pluralist Australia is a Christian faith community. Ryan is also critical of Groome's approach:

> (I do not) accept that Groome's shared Christian Praxis approach is valid as the guiding theory for all the activities which constitute an Australian Catholic school's program in religious education. Most significantly, Shared Christian Praxis as outlined by Groome cannot be the guiding theory for the classroom religion program in a Catholic school. Some of the Catholic school's religious education activities may lend themselves to the utilisation of a Shared Christian Praxis approach, but this will rarely be the case in the compulsory classroom. (Ryan 1997:12)

One could also question whether schools can call themselves faith communities and whether the praxis model is appropriate for their objectives in the formation of faith.

On careful examination, it is obvious that the language Groome uses is theological rather than educational. Some of his critics point out that his use of theological language makes the Praxis approach more at home in practical theology than in education. In fact, the Praxis approach offers a form of theologising designed to be used in classrooms rather than providing an educational approach to the study of religion.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, many teachers in Australia, including Catholic Education Office authorities, believed that Groome's Shared Christian Praxis approach would be the solution to their problems because it not only presented a faith perspective but also appeared to offer a genuine critical and emancipatory approach to the teaching of religion. However, Lovat, whose criticism of Groome's work has already been noted, is even more critical of what he calls "watered down versions of praxis implied in many applications of Groome's theory" (Lovat 1995:184). What Lovat is referring to is school textbooks designed for use in some Australian schools that provide only weak adaptations of Groome's theory. Teachers who follow such textbooks uncritically without reading Groome may well compound the weaknesses of Groome's approach.

Many others also saw the Praxis approach providing an avenue from which to address issues of justice. Raduntz believes that the Shared Christian Praxis approach does not provide an educational tool to implement the church's social justice teachings. She considers that the Praxis approach represents an "innovative but conservative approach, the primary concern of which is to maintain the institutional integrity of the church" (Raduntz 1995:191–192). Furthermore, she argues that, rather than revitalising the Christian message and facilitating transformative action, the approach places the Christian tradition beyond criticism and limits the field of participants' discernment.

Lane is also critical of the Shared Christian Praxis Approach because it stops short of including an experience of social action as something intrinsic to the process of religious education. He suggests that religious education should develop a philosophy of knowing that combines a dialectical relationship between action and reflection, theory and practice, experience and understanding and fieldwork and interpretation (Lane 1986:164). In his opinion, religious education will only succeed to the extent that a critical unity between theory and practice, and

between action and reflection is maintained. For Lane, Groome's approach does not go far enough in the follow-through of conversion, decision and choice arising out of the Christian story. Although this may be implied in the five movements, Lane does not see it clearly outlined in Groome's description. Lane's criticism reflects Darcy-Berube's remark that "Shared Praxis should include, if it is to be as fruitful as it can be, not only shared reflection but also shared action" (Darcy-Berube 1978:127).

The Shared Christian Praxis approach has obvious value for developing a reflective style within the catechetical process but its limitation is its assumption that the participants of the group are committed to the Christian faith.

The student population of Catholic schools in Australia reflects the diversity of beliefs and practices both within and outside the Catholic faith. Groome's approach assumes that students in the Catholic religious education classrooms are willing and able to share where they are at in their faith journey. Two factors militate against this: the classroom is not appropriate for enfaithing activities; and students may not have experienced the tradition in the way required by Groome's approach. While Groome's Praxis model attempts to be emancipatory and critical, it stops short because of its catechetical nature. To be a truly critical method, the approach would need to be broadened to encompass exploration of more that one's own religious tradition and to be less focused on the faith development of participants.

Groome's Shared Christian Praxis approach has influenced the direction of religious education in some Australian Catholic schools for over twenty five years. While the Praxis approach has something to offer religious educators, its scope is limited to contexts where people freely assemble to share their Christian faith and nurture each other in that faith. While these conditions of Groome's Shared Christian Praxis approach might be met on some occasions in the broader life of Catholic schools, they are definitely not the conditions that prevail in most classrooms where religious education is compulsory.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, many teachers in Australian Catholic schools began to question the effectiveness of faith-forming models that presumed a willingness on the part of students and teachers to share their religious faith. The questioning was prompted by the

changing nature of Australian society, particularly with respect to the dramatically changing clientele in church and Catholic schools. In contrast to the 1960s when approximately 60 percent of Catholics attended church weekly, by the 1970s church attendance had dropped to about 40 percent and today is 32 percent. Declining church attendance had many ramifications for the content and methods used to teach religion in schools.

Educational Models for Teaching Religion

The need to address the issue of separating catechesis from religious education, particularly in the classroom, was signalled as early as 1975 when Gerard Rummery published his text *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society.* In this book, he questioned whether a catechetical approach to religious education should be the only way of teaching religion in a pluralist society. He not only suggested that catechesis was no longer relevant in the school setting but also recommended that educational principles should be applied to the teaching of religion in schools. As a result of his work, distinctions between religious education and catechesis were openly debated in the religious education journals of the time.

The distinction between catechesis and religious education had been debated in the United Kingdom and the United States of America for some time. From the mid 1960s onwards the writings of the American scholar Gabriel Moran had a profound influence on how religion was to be taught in Catholic schools in Australia. He argued that scripture and liturgy were not sufficient for understanding and that knowledge was also required. According to Moran a new approach must be born from good educational theory and sound theological study. He suggested that theology should supply the content and that education should supply the method. Moran challenged teachers to expand their notion of religion teaching beyond Christianity to ecumenical education which, for him, meant not only teaching about other religions but also teaching Christianity in a totally new way. He also suggested that teaching about world religions required a level of impartiality. For him, a catechetical approach and evangelisation was no longer appropriate in the religious education classroom (Moran 1981).

Australian religious educators such as Basil Moore, Norman Habel, and Terence Lovat argued variously for religion programs that allowed students to learn about religion without necessarily requiring them to profess a belief in a particular religion. They were concerned that a religion program should increase students' religious literacy and ultimately increase tolerance and understanding of a variety of religions including Christianity. Their writings ultimately influenced the development of *Study of Religion* programs which explored world religions and which were accepted for use as elective subjects in Australian secondary schools.

Study of Religion courses designed specifically for senior secondary schools emerged in the mid 1980s and drew mainly on the British experience. Text books followed a phenomenological approach as presented in Ninian Smart's dimensional schema developed for the Lancaster-based Schools Council in the early 1970s. However, feminist scholars and others interested in dialogical discourse challenged the phenomenological approach arguing that the idea of value-free descriptions was not possible as no one can be completely neutral since we view the world subjectively through the lens of our own experience. More recently Jackson has also cited concerns about the approach as it has been used in schools in the UK. He is concerned about the overemphasis on the external actions of believers without due attention being paid to their motivation, the trivialisation resulting from a broad and sometimes superficial coverage of a number of religions, and the failure to investigate issues of religious truth and asking secondary students to analyse and deal with material that is often far removed from their own experience (Jackson 1997:10).

Not completely satisfied with the appropriateness of phenomenological approaches for the study of religion in schools, Basil Moore and Norman Habel developed a religious studies approach called the Typological Model which is based on the "types" or components that make up any religion (Moore and Habel 1982). While they acknowledge the similarity between their list of component parts and Smart's dimensions, they argued that the purpose was different. Moore and Habel believed that teachers and students must be offered practical and workable models for use in the classroom, something that Smart's phenomenological approach did not offer.

The Typological Approach

Moore and Habel's starting point for effective learning in religion, like learning in any other area, is to begin with the known and then move to the unknown. Their approach suggests that students need to be introduced to the fundamental "types" or building blocks of religion before they can engage in serious study of religious traditions. The typological approach involves cognitive skills such as the selection of examples, and developing skills in observing and describing religious phenomena, component analysis, structural and functional synthesis, and in wider religious and social synthesis.

Because of its cross-cultural nature, the typological approach has much in common with other inter-faith models or integrative RE in that it considers a number of different traditions and religions necessary to provide the material for the study of elements or types. Moore and Habel believe it to be essential that the religious examples one knows from one's own tradition should make up the primary topics in the course of study. Therefore, before studying other religious traditions, students must be able to recognise "types" in their own religious tradition. Consequently the typological approach always begins with the home tradition of the student.

The six-stage model put forward by Moore and Habel is equally adaptable to the confessional and the public school and is able to promote confessional awareness or general religious literacy. Stage one of the model involves selection of the phenomena or "types" to be found in home tradition. Stage two is an identification of the generic "type" to which the chosen topic belongs. Stage three is an application of stage two and incorporates a selection of examples of the "type" from other religions. Stage four applies the information gathered in stage three to the original selected "type." Stage five locates the phenomenon in the wider context of the chosen tradition and offers endless opportunities to explore other dimensions of the home tradition. Stage six attempts to utilise the insights gained from stages four and five to interpret the phenomenon (Moore and Habel 1982).

The distinctive contribution that the typological approach makes to the teaching of religion in schools is in its grounding in education, particularly educational psychology and curriculum theory. The typological approach maintains the rights of student freedom and sets out

parameters in which the study of religion can take place without invading the personal space of students in the way that many of the traditional, catechetical methods of religious education have done. Moore and Habel produced a method of teaching religion which works well alongside other subjects in the school. The approach caters for a broad range of schools and people and, according to Lovat, the greatest strength of the approach is its method: "It has been devised with consciousness of, and constant reference to, the rest of education" (Lovat 1989:80). Their work was influential in that it established a way for teachers to teach about religion and is still being used in many States. It also provided the platform from which teachers could explore other ways and develop other educational approaches.

Religion Studies in Schools

These theoretical discussions led to the eventual development of *Studies of Religion* in senior secondary schools in Australia. Each State now offers some form of *Study of Religion* and student enrolments in the subject are at an all time high.

Australia does not have a national curriculum: each State approached the introduction of *Study of Religion* differently. Queensland opted for a stand alone subject, *Study of Religion*, which was offered to Year 11 and 12 students in a trial-pilot phase in 1985 and, in 1989, was made available to all schools in the State. It began with only 575 students in 18 schools but since then student enrolments have grown enormously. This year, 4227 students in Year 12 will complete *Study of Religion* in 141 schools (QSA statistics). The subject is attractive because it contributes towards tertiary entrance scores. But it has not been taken up by any public school. Perhaps this is because of its stand-alone character. This is unusual as public schools in other Australian States have embraced *Studies of Religion.*

New South Wales began by imbedding a depth study, *Religion and Belief*, as one of three optional topics offered for study for fourteen weeks, within the subject *Society and Culture.* Interestingly, very few church or religiously based schools taught the depth study as they appeared to prefer their own religious education programs. The success of the depth study came because schools in the public sector taught it

and its popularity later led to the development of a discrete Higher School Certificate subject entitled *Studies in Religion* which was released in 1991. The objective of the syllabus was:

> To promote an awareness, understanding and appreciation of the nature of religion and the influence of religions traditions, beliefs and practices on societies and on the individual, with an emphasis on the Australian context. (NSW Board of Studies 1991:7)

The aim of the 2005 *Studies of Religion* syllabus is:

> to promote an understanding and critical awareness of the nature and significance of religion and the influence of belief systems and religious traditions on individuals and within society. (NSW Board of Studies 2005:8)

In New South Wales, *Studies of Religion* is one of the fastest growing subjects at the Higher School Certificate (HSC) level, increasing in student numbers by 30% per annum. In 1999 the subject had only 51 students from public schools but it increased to 429 in 2000. In 2003, it was reported to be the sixth most popular subject, and in 2006 was listed fifth in the ten most popular subjects and had 12,458 students enrolled. The course has a range of topic options which is one of its strengths, but the syllabus leaves the impression that much of the course is description. In 1999 Hobson and Edwards recommend the inclusion of a more critical rationality and epistemological coherence into the syllabus but the 2005 syllabus does not show this kind of progress and the physical layout and presentation of the syllabus under the headings of "Students learn about" and "Students learn to" encourages description rather than analysis and higher order thinking processes.

In Victoria, there are two courses available to students: *Religion and Society* (introduced in 1994 and revised in 2006) and *Texts and Traditions* (introduced in 1990 and revised in 1999). The majority of students take *Religion and Society* which is made up of four units: *Religion and Society, Ethics and Morality, The Search for Meaning*, and *Challenge and Response*. The general observation made by Hobson and Edwards is that the study design is "a rather bland document when compared to the Queensland and NSW Syllabi… and concentrates on the more descriptive, sociological aspects of religious study" (Hobson and Edwards 1999:154).

While much can be improved in the current syllabi these *Study of Religion* programs have advanced the study of religion in senior secondary schools in Australia and have established religion as a subject worth studying and a valid matriculation subject. The significant shift is that religion is now studied from an educational point of view rather than from a faith perspective. From the first *Study of Religion* syllabus in Australia, it was made very clear that

> The intentions of the syllabus… are primarily educational. It is assumed that a separate study of religion's own distinctive nature is compatible with and can make a contribution to the academic life and educational goals of any secondary school. This syllabus is designed to be available to students in State, Church, or Independent schools, irrespective of the existence or level of an individual religious belief. Openness towards a variety of understandings and opinions must clearly be seen to be operative. (BSSSS 1989:1)

Hobson's and Edwards' evaluation of the Queensland course is positive:

> The Queensland course accords well with the extended pluralist approach to the teaching of religions… the comprehensive liberal values criterion which stresses the importance of developing positive tolerance in pupils towards other religions and communities is recognised explicitly in the rationale for the syllabus. (Hobson and Edwards 1999:157)

They conclude that "the Queensland program is a very useful one [which] satisfies well their basic criteria for teaching religion in a pluralist society" (Hobson and Edwards 1999:157).

The Queensland syllabus is reviewed every five years. The 2001 syllabus committee, in order to improve the educational value of the subject, deliberately expanded the educational approaches of the previous syllabus. Conscious of the multi-dimensional nature of religion studies, I as chair of the syllabus committee recommended that teachers use a variety of approaches to teach *Study of Religion*. The approaches suggested ranged from historical, phenomenological, and typological, to sociological, and feminist approaches. Adopting any approach meant accepting certain assumptions and priorities as well as a commitment to push the methodology to its limits. The syllabus encouraged teachers and students to critique and analyse the approaches evaluating the usefulness and comprehensiveness of each. Teachers and students were

invited to engage in critical investigation of approaches to identify biases in the approach, cultures, textbooks and their own personal attitudes (Goldburg 2001). Some approaches are complementary or dialogical and others are contrastive in method and purpose. Using dialogical approaches allows cultural critique to take place and introduces issues which have traditionally been regarded as existing outside the academic study of religion.

The syllabus is now being revised and a further development and critiquing of the multiple approaches suggested in the 2001 syllabus is taking place. Simply listing the approaches and suggesting how they might be applied to units was not sufficient to move the teaching of *Study of Religion* along the dialogical path as originally intended and there is only minimal evidence of critique being employed in the classroom. The syllabus committee is now suggesting that teaching, learning and assessment follow a "Process of Inquiry" which emphasises the development of investigative and thinking skills, and contributes to students' ability to formulate ideas, to make judgements, and to reach conclusions. The Process of Inquiry encourages students to move beyond acquisition of facts to metacognition, to develop understanding about ideas and concepts and to take responsibility for their own learning. The steps of the inquiry process involve students working through a five-step process involving cognitive and affective objectives: Framing, Investigating, Reasoning, Judging and Reflecting. Emerging from critical pedagogy, the process of inquiry offers a way forward in developing critical religious literacy.

Although Australian religion teachers have used the term religious literacy for some time, scant attention was given to both the critical and transformative elements. My understanding of religious literacy has been expanded to encompass some of the competencies that Green suggests as essential dimensions of literacy: the operational, the cultural and the critical dimensions. The operational dimension involves "competency with regard to the language system" and is concerned with the way individuals use "language... in order to operate effectively in specific contexts" (Green 1988:160). The cultural dimension encompasses the meaning aspect of literacy including events that are not only "*context* specific but also entail a specific *content*" (Green 1988:160). The cultural dimension recognises that there is a mutually informing

relationship between the language system and the meaning system. In some way religious literacy was a goal of the catechism but there was no movement to the critical dimension that has to do with the "social construction of knowledge" (Green 1988:162). Implicit in this dimension of literacy is critique, which for Green, means that "individuals should not simply participate in culture but should in various ways transform and actively produce it" (Green 1988:163). The three dimensions operate together to provide an integrated view of literacies as social practices.

From my perspective what is required is not simply religious literacy but critical religious literacy. To be critical, according to Boys, is to employ self-critical scholarship. It does not refer "to one's attitude toward the content…, but to ways of thinking that enable us to recognise the assumptions and bias that we… might impose" (Boys 2004:150). Unsworth describes the steps in the process towards critical literacy as moving through three phases: recognition, reproduction and reflection (Unsworth 2002). Recognition literacy involves learning to recognise and produce the codes that are used to construct and communicate meaning as well as cultural practices present and central to common experience of everyday life. Reproduction literacy involves understanding and producing the conventional visual and verbal text forms that construct and communicate the established systematic knowledge of cultural institutions. Reflection literacy involves learning how to read inclusion and exclusion, analysing and interrogating verbal and visual codes to expose how choice of language and image privilege certain viewpoints and how other choices of visual and verbal resources could construct alternative views.

A critical literacy approach challenges us to examine how we read the world, to examine what we take for granted and to critique the particular culture in which texts are constructed. It enables us to look at written, visual, spoken, multimodal and performance texts to question and challenge attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface. It is, according to Wooldridge, "an orientation to literacy, not a separate technique or strategy but part of a pedagogy underpinning a whole approach to classroom practice" (Wooldridge 2001:259). It emerges from critical pedagogy, which Freire says we need to evaluate and critique received ideas, particularly those presented in student texts (Freire 1970). Most often we provide students with texts that present a

mainstream view and omit contestable texts so that students are rarely invited to engage in critical analysis. While many use a hermeneutic of suspicion when reading biblical texts, few apply the same hermeneutic of suspicion to text books particularly those giving information about world religions. A critical literacy approach assists students to question the text, (without destroying it), and reinforces the idea that there are multiple readings and realities. Through such an approach students are encouraged and enabled to identify, examine and critique problematic, contradictory and multiple ways of viewing the world.

It is important for religious educators to keep in mind the power they possess as teachers, selectors and framers of knowledge. A critical literacy approach challenges teachers to consider how they have constructed their knowledge of the subject and how their selection of teaching resources reflects their perceptions and biases. It can be helpful to ask: What view of knowledge am I presenting? What or whose knowledge is seen as valuable? A critical literacy approach recognises teachers as curriculum decision makers while at the same time inviting them to be self-critical and also encourages critiquing the interests of curriculum decisions.

The 2001 Queensland *Study of Religion* syllabus moved away from purely didactic or transmission models and suggested an inquiry based approach which promoted a serious study of religion. The 2007 syllabus is imbedding a social constructivist pedagogy which it is hoped will make the subject more robust.

A constructivist approach is being adopted because it offers opportunities and occasions for students to develop their own questions, needs and purposes, and thereby gradually construct a more mature understanding of themselves, the world and others. The approach aims to develop "expert learners" who will not only question themselves as learners and the strategies they use but will also broaden the tools they employ to assist them to learn. Learning is spiral: it requires students to reflect on their experiences and to continually increase the complexity of ideas which in turn enables them to integrate new information. The challenge for the teacher is to provide problem-solving activities and inquiry-based learning activities for students so that they can test their ideas, draw conclusions based on evidence and share their knowledge in a collaborative learning environment. "Constructivist pedagogy and

inquiry based learning are ways of involving the learner in a more dynamic way in the religion classroom" (Goldburg 2007:11).

Many issues impact on and shape the teaching of *Studies of Religion* in Australian schools. While the syllabus attempts to set the agenda for the teaching of *Study of Religion*, it is often the style of assessment used in each State which shapes and forms the approaches used for teaching and learning about religion. In the States where external public examinations are held at the conclusion of Year 12, assessment is frequently characterised by memorisation related activities and low cognitive level processes. The examinations generally consist of multiple-choice questions, short written responses, and one or two essays. Because of the constraints of writing under time-pressure, information is often decontextualised and students tend to rely on their ability to reproduce core content which leaves little opportunity for them to analyse and critique information. The style of questions asked often limit the student to declarative knowledge. Requirements for such examinations tend to drive the teaching and learning experiences in States which employ this kind of assessment whereas in States where there is school-based assessment or a combination of school-based assessment and public exams there is greater evidence of deep learning rather than surface learning. In States where portfolios are used in the assessment process, students are able to demonstrate their ability across diverse tasks and through a variety of genres. Assessment by portfolio enables students to view assessment as a powerful learning tool and requires them to present divergent materials which demonstrate greater critique and analysis than other forms of assessment. Assignments elicit application-related activities and require deep learning from students with respect to one topic. Some States require students to perform a range of assessment tasks using a variety of assessment techniques which enables students to demonstrate their ability across a range of topics and through a variety of assessment techniques.

Until the mid 1980s, teachers who taught religion in Australia were employed exclusively in the independent school sector and taught religious education from a faithforming perspective. When *Study of Religion* courses were introduced into secondary schools, some religious education teachers were invited to teach *Study of Religion*. These teachers had little background in comparative religion and no qualifications

in religion studies. This posed some significant challenges for teaching *Study of Religion*. In some cases teachers from the Social Sciences and the Humanities moved to teaching *Study of Religion*. While this had some advantage in extending methodology, it nevertheless introduced a bias to teaching of religion in that history teachers, for instance, tended to choose historical events and other content with which they felt comfortable rather than engaging with the discipline of religion studies.

Australia's interesting relationship with religion is also reflected in the establishment of universities. Like the University of Sydney, when the University of Melbourne was being established in 1853, it was established as a secular institution with no theology: a response to the sectarianism of the day and a reflection of its post-enlightenment origins. The University of Queensland, on the other hand, provided training for clergy through a Bachelor of Divinity degree which was granted until the mid 1970s. In 1975, a change of approach was heralded by the renaming of the department to "Studies in Religion." This change reflects similar introductions of Study of Religion courses or departments in universities around Australia.

When religion studies departments began to offer post-graduate courses, many teachers availed of the opportunity to gain qualifications in the area. More recently, teachers have had the opportunity to complete a religion studies major in their degree prior to beginning teacher education. However, very few teachers have a religion specialisation in their undergraduate degree. By far the majority of teachers with study of religion qualifications have gained these through post-graduate courses.

Conclusion

The shift from catechetical to educational approaches in the teaching of religion has been an important one, and has enabled the engagement of more Australian students in the *Study of Religion*. Now, in every State in Australia, students in both public and Church-sponsored schools have the opportunity to study religion in an educational framework. The challenge for syllabus developers is to continue to provide dynamic teaching and learning approaches such as constructivist pedagogy and critical religious literacy so that students are able to engage effectively in today's religiously diverse world. Even though enrolment in *Studies of*

Religion is growing, it is not a compulsory subject for senior secondary students in public or independent schools. Indeed in most church-based schools students choose between *Study of Religion* and *Religious Education*. However, *Study of Religion* is important in that it has introduced an academic approach to the study of religion into public school sectors, and has brought an educational approach to the teaching of religious education in most independent schools either through the introduction of *Study of Religion* or through changes in the way religious education is taught. *Studies of Religion* in Australia would be strengthened by greater interaction between the disciplines of religion studies, education and religious education. Such cross-disciplinary interaction would be beneficial to all partners and in particular would benefit the teaching of religion in schools.

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Unity in Diversity:
Religion Education and Public Pedagogy in
South Africa

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Abstract

On 12 September 2003, Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, presented to Parliament South Africa's new national policy on religion and education. Breaking with the confessional religious instruction of the past, the policy established a new educational agenda for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity in South African schools. Although this policy was the focus of many years of educational debate and religious controversy, it was also part of broader post-apartheid efforts in nation building. The policy was based on an inclusive definition of citizenship; it enacted the state's commitment to constitutional values, respect for cultural diversity, and transformational promise of moving a divided society towards national unity. In this broader context, I want to link South Africa's national policy for religion and education with post-apartheid initiatives in cultural heritage. As public pedagogy, state-driven and market-driven heritage projects have created an expanding classroom for "celebrating diversity and building national unity." Heritage projects have been criticized for manufacturing uniformity and privileging the extraordinary. In working out a curriculum for religion education in schools, these criticisms also need to be addressed. This article proposes that fruitful exchanges in theory and pedagogical practice can emerge at the intersection of religion education, heritage studies, and the history of religions.

After many years of policy analysis and public debate, South Africa's National Policy on Religion and Education was finally established in

September 2003. Departing from the overtly religious agenda of the apartheid regime, this new national policy affirmed respect for the religious heritage of South Africa, in all its diversity, but made a principled distinction between religious education, instruction, or nurture, which was best served by families and religious communities, and religion education, which was defined as teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity. Religion education, based on educational goals and objectives, but also promising social benefits of increasing understanding, reducing prejudice, and expanding toleration, was introduced in the curriculum as an integral part of the subject field, Life Orientation. As part of a learning area engaged with values, from hygiene to human rights, religion education was designed to advance knowledge about the many religions of South Africa and the world but also to cultivate informed respect for diversity (South Africa, Department of Education 2003).

South Africa's new policy for religion and education had a history. It was developed against the background of the Christian instruction, or indoctrination, promoted by the apartheid regime, with its theological impetus for a Christian National Education, pervading every subject, but foregrounded in religious education. This policy grew, slowly, out of the research of the National Education Policy Investigation of the early 1990s (National Education Coordinating Committee 1992:74–75), the National Education and Training Forum during 1993–94, and consultations leading to the South African Schools Act (1996). A five-person Ministerial Committee on Religious Education, which submitted its report in 1999, tried to work out a compromise among competing interests (South Africa, Department of Education 1999; Stonier 1998). Internally divided, this committee proposed leaving it up to local schools to decide whether they would have religious instruction, or education about religion and religions, or some combination of both. Subsequently, a larger Ministerial Standing Committee on Religion and Education was convened to formulate a coherent and consistent national policy. This committee was instructed to begin with the basic values enshrined in the South African Constitution and operate within a human-rights framework. Out of this work, which was supported by intensive collaboration and extensive consultations, the Department of Education was able to finalize its national policy for religion and education.

As the curriculum for Life Orientation was developed, learning about religion was located in the context of "social development," situated in relation to learning about human rights, democratic participation, diversity, and community. In General Education and Training (GET, Grades R-9), the learning outcome for Social Development, at every level, was specified: "The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions." Along with outcomes in Health Promotion, Personal Development, and Physical Development and Movement, this learning outcome for Social Development makes up the learning area of Life Orientation. In Further Education and Training (FET, Grades 10–12), we find a similar location of teaching and learning about religion within Life Orientation, with religion education situated within the learning outcome for Responsible Citizenship in which: "The learner is able to demonstrate competence and commitment regarding the values and rights that underpin the constitution in order to practice responsible citizenship, and enhance social justice and sustainable living." Throughout the curriculum, therefore, teaching and learning about religion is integrated into social development and citizenship education.

Within that context, learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity was formulated in terms of specific assessment standards. At each grade, summarized here from R through 12, the learner demonstrates the achievement of the broader educational outcome of social development with respect to the component of religion education when he or she:

> R: Identifies and names symbols linked to own religion; 1: Matches symbols associated with a range of religions in South Africa; 2: Describes important days from diverse religions; 3: Discusses diet, clothing, and decorations in a variety of religions in South Africa; 4: Discusses significant places and buildings in a variety of religions in South Africa; 5: Discusses festivals and customs from a variety of religions in South Africa; 6: Discusses the dignity of the person in a variety of religions in South Africa; 7: Explains the role of oral traditions and scriptures in a range of the world's religions; 8: Discusses the contributions of organizations from various religions to social development; 9: Reflects on and discusses the contributions of various religions in promoting peace; 10: Displays knowledge about the major religions, ethical traditions, and belief systems in South Africa, clarifies own values and beliefs, and respects the rights of others to hold their own;

11: Critically analyses moral issues and dilemmas and explains the consequences of beliefs and actions; 12: Formulates a personal mission statement based on core aspects of personal philosophies, values, beliefs and ideologies, which will inform and direct actions in life. (South Africa, Department of Education 2002a, 2002b)

These educational expectations, which were intended to enable learners to begin engaging the religious diversity of their country and world, featured as part of social development and citizenship education. In order to participate in a unified non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic South Africa, as well as within an increasingly globalizing world, learners needed at least this level of educational engagement with religion, religions, and religious diversity.

To give a sense of proportion, however, we need to recognize that the curriculum actually allowed very little space for this educational activity. In Grades R-9, the learning area of Life Orientation, which includes four outcomes — Health Promotion, Social Development, Personal Development, and Physical Development and Movement — was allocated 8 percent teaching time out of the total curriculum. As one of four outcomes in Life Orientation, Social Development can be expected to account for 2 percent of teaching time. As one in four assessment standards within Social Development, Religion Education ends up accounting for perhaps 0.5 percent of the overall curriculum. Although these calculations cannot be applied mechanically, we can only conclude that Religion Education, the focus of so much controversy and contestation, actually has only a very small share of the general curriculum in South African schools.

Having developed a curriculum in line with the new national policy, little progress was initially made in teacher training, whether pre-service or in-service training, to enable teachers to achieve the educational outcomes of Life Orientation in the classroom (Christiaans 2006). With respect to religion education, educational frameworks and resources for teachers were developed (for example, Steyn 2004), but much more work needed to be done. At a meeting of the Ministerial Standing Committee on Religion and Education held in Pretoria in 2001, Minister of Education Kader Asmal had remarked that he would be looking to Departments of Religious Studies all over the country for help in curriculum development and teacher training for religion

education. But the restructuring of higher education in South Africa
found university departments dedicated to the academic study of reli-
gion embattled, shrinking, or closed down (Clasquin 2005). While
university departments were struggling, the Department of Education
further expanded the scope of teaching and learning about religion in
South African schools by establishing a new senior subject, Religion
Studies, as an examinable option in Grades 10–12, the last three years
of school education. A flurry of new textbooks for Religion Studies
appeared, often in consultation with university-based scholars of religion,
but the challenge of teacher training for this new subject remained.

South Africa's new national policy for religion and education created
expanding opportunities for the academic study of religion to engage
the educational challenges of defining religion, representing religions,
and developing curricula, learning materials, and teacher training just
when university departments dedicated to the academic study of reli-
gion had diminishing capacity to address these challenges. The new
national policy represented a promise for the classroom that required
resources, time, and the concerted efforts of scholars of religion and
education to fulfill. Nevertheless, this promise, established in policy,
articulated crucial educational objectives and social projects of the new
South Africa by aligning teaching and learning about religion with
nation building. My interest, in this article, is with the prospects and
problems of that alignment.

Over the years that I have been involved in the long and contested
process of policy formation, I have written about policy options
(Chidester et al. 1994) and policy debates (Chidester 2003a, 2007). I
have concentrated on the politics of this process. Others have written
about the import of this new approach to teaching and learning about
religion in the light of social transformation (Steyn 1999), religious
pluralism (Kumar 2006), and pedagogical practice (Ferguson and Roux
2003a, 2003b, 2004; Roux 2005, 2007; Roux and Du Preez 2005,
2006). But I have been primarily interested in politics, including new
forms of citizenship, not only national citizenship, which dramatically
broadened in post-apartheid South Africa, but also cultural citizenship
and global citizenship (Chidester 2003b), and new aspirations for the
South African state to be a unified constitutional state, a diverse cul-
tural state, and a progressive transformational state (Chidester 2006).

Accordingly, I have been interested in locating religion education, during a time of transition, at the intersection of citizens and the state.

As a historian of religions, I have always thought that this political interest in the relation between individuals, as citizens, and the state, as a powerful but also meaningful totality, resonates with what historian of religions Bruce Lincoln long ago identified as one of our must crucial analytical problems: how is any first person singular transformed into a first person plural? (Lincoln 1987:74). How do we account for the intersections between personal subjectivity and social collectivity? How does any "I" become an "Us"? How does the term, "religion," provide a focusing lens for analyzing this nexus?

Here I want to take up this problem by indexing South Africa's National Policy on Religion and Education to post-apartheid nation-building initiatives, which were embedded within the Department of Education, most forcefully in the Values in Education Initiative, but have also been extended through a broader range of state-driven and market-driven initiatives in public pedagogy. In policy and practice, religion education is located in the classroom, but it is also situated in what I will call the expanding classroom of state and commercial ventures in public education for a new South Africa.

Although religion education in the school classroom, as a matter of principle, as a matter of policy, does not seek to advance any particular religious interests, the expanding classroom of nation-building draws on a range of resources and strategies that echo religion. Conservative Christian critics of the new policy, in a parody of this observation, have complained that the new "non-religious" policy is actually promoting a new multi-faith religion or a new religion of secular humanism. The policy is not advocating any such religion. The policy is clear in demarcating educational rather than religious aims and objectives in teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity in South Africa and the world. However, since this policy is situated in the larger context of building a new nation out of the legacy of damage and dehumanization suffered by the majority of South Africans under apartheid, it inevitably resonates with recognizably religious resources and strategies for redemption by creating an intersection between personal subjectivities and the social collectivity that will redeem a human identity.

Educational Policy

In his foreword to the new national policy, Minister of Education Kader Asmal began by invoking South Africa's national motto, "unity in diversity." Adopted in 2000, this new national motto, emblazoned on a new national coat of arms, was designed to mark a dramatic break from the racialized divisions of the apartheid past. Although the motto was translated into all eleven of South Africa's official languages, its canonical formulation was in the extinct language of the /Xam Bushmen, *!Ke e: /xarra //ke*. This /Xam phrase could be variously translated as "people who are different come together," as "diverse people unite," or as "unity in diversity," which was the preferred formulation for national policy, since the motto evoked national unity, echoing other national slogans, from the *e pluribus unum* of the revolutionary era of an emerging United States of America to the postcolonial mottoes adopted by the Republic of India or the Republic of Indonesia. Nelson Mandela, during his visit to Jakarta in 1997, anticipated South Africa's adoption of this national motto, while drawing on these revolutionary and postcolonial precedents, by observing,

> "Unity in Diversity" is a phrase we use often in South Africa, which is also a country of widely diverse peoples and cultures. These differences were misused by apartheid in order to divide our nation. But today our diversity is a source of strength. We are a nation of many colours and cultures, but forming a harmonious unity like a rainbow after a heavy storm. (Mandela 1997)

Accordingly, South Africa's national policy for religion and education had to be aligned with this broader project of building a unified nation out of a fractured past. It could only be framed in terms of unity in diversity.

Consistently, in South Africa's National Policy for Religion and Education, diversity was drawn into the service of national unity. "Our diversity of language, culture, and religion," the policy states, "is a wonderful national asset." Instead of being regarded as a disability, with the threat of creating divided loyalties, the protection and promotion of these differences could provide valuable resources for building national unity. "We therefore celebrate diversity as a unifying national resource," the policy continued, "as captured in our Coat of

Arms: !Ke e: /xarra //ke (Unity in Diversity)." Although counter-intuitive, perhaps, and contrary to South Africa's historical experience of difference, segregation, and fragmentation, this motive for nation building was central because the "policy for the role of religion in education is driven by the dual mandate of celebrating diversity and building national unity" (art. 10).

Situated within this promise of a nation in the making, the policy had to adjudicate relations between the South African state and the many religions of South Africa. Aligned with the provisions and values of the Constitution, the state ensured freedom for religion but also freedom from religious discrimination or coercion. But the national policy went further in developing the implications of a "cooperative model" for relations between state and religion that established separation in principle but grounds for cooperation in practice. The policy affirmed the importance of religion and religions in South Africa. As Minister Asmal wrote in his foreword, "The policy recognizes the rich and diverse heritage of our country and adopts a cooperative model that accepts our rich heritage and the possibility of creative interaction between schools and faith. . . ." However, this recognition of the importance of religion and other worldviews, with all due respect for their particularity, was affirmed as part of the national project, drawing upon South Africa's "rich and diverse heritage" to advance national unity. But here the policy made the bold promise that its approach to religion and education would develop educationally sound programs for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity while also contributing to the national project of creating "unity in diversity" by affirming "unity without uniformity and diversity without divisiveness" (art. 70).

For all of its attention to outlining a new approach to religion and education, spelling out basic principles for teaching and learning about religion and religions in South African schools, the national policy was inevitably indexed to a wider range of post-apartheid initiatives in nation building. Within the Department of Education, the new policy was integrated into the broader aims of the Values in Education Initiative, which sought to overcome the damage of apartheid by developing new approaches to anti-racist and anti-sexist education and by identifying a range of basic values, such as equity, tolerance, accountability, and

social honor, that should be instilled in all educational practice (South Africa, Department of Education 2001; Asmal and James 2002). The national policy for religion and education explicitly aligned itself with this initiative and suggested ways in which its new approach to religion education could cultivate all of the values identified by the Department of Education's Manifesto on Values in Education (art. 14). But the new policy also looked outside of the Department of Education to identify with other national initiatives in promoting values. Under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, the South African presidency was promising the cultural rebirth of an African Renaissance (Makgoba 1999), underwritten by ambitious plans for economic growth throughout the entire continent, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), while trying to mobilize religious communities and other organs of civil society within South Africa to create a Moral Regeneration Movement (Rauch 2005a, 2005b). As stated in the national policy for religion and education, "This policy links religion and education with new initiatives in cultural rebirth (the African Renaissance), moral regeneration, and the promotion of values in our schools" (art. 7). Therefore, while outlining principles for educational policy, pedagogy, teacher training, and teaching materials, South Africa's national policy for religion and education was linked to a broader range of educational projects within the schools, the public sphere, and the international arena.

The policy for religion and education intentionally echoed the preamble to the South African Constitution, which committed the new nation to honoring the past, healing divisions in the present, and building a future, by promising that a new approach to teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity "can play a significant role in preserving our heritage, respecting our diversity, and building a future based on progressive values" (art. 7). In this formula for national unity, the heritage of the past and the diversity of the present could be mobilized in the service of a national future.

This formula, of course, was not only politics and policy. It was also poetics and persuasion.

When President Thabo Mbeki introduced South Africa's new national motto and coat of arms on 27 April 2000, South Africa's Freedom Day, which marks the annual celebration of the first democratic elections of 1994, he invoked a sacred poetics of space and time (Mbeki

2000). In the coat of arms, visual imagery, drawn from Bushman rock art, reinforced the /Xam phrase, *!Ke e: /xarra //ke*, "diverse people unite," to signal a transformation of space and time. As anthropologist Alan Barnard has observed, in this national symbolism Khoisan people — the earliest people in imperial theories of evolution, the lowest people in colonial policies of extermination — "were chosen to embody the mythical charter of the new South African multicultural nation" (Barnard 2004:19; see Barnard 2003). That mythical charter, like any mythical charter, set out a fundamental orientation in space and time. In this case, however, orientation required reorientation, a dramatic transformation of spatial and temporal relations.

In transforming space, these new national symbols, as President Mbeki proposed, presented an image of South African national unity that "is both South African and African." But the resonance of this imagery, according to Mbeki, extended even further by evoking basic truths of humanity that were "both African and universal." Radiating out from South Africa, this new symbol of national unity held universal significance for all human beings. The two human figures at the center of South Africa's coat of arms, as Mbeki observed, "are depicted in an attitude of greeting, demonstrating the transformation of the individual into a social being who belongs to a collective and interdependent humanity." This national symbolism, therefore, was universal because it represented the reciprocal recognition of a shared humanity.

In transforming time, these new national symbols echoed the preamble to the South African Constitution by promising to bridge past, present, and future. The new coat of arms, as Thabo Mbeki explained, "serves to evoke our distant past, our living present and our future as it unfolds before us. It represents the permanent yet evolving identity of the South African people as it shapes itself through time and space." By evoking South Africa's distant past in the language and art of Khoisan people who had been subjected to colonial genocide, these national symbols were formulated in the extinct language of an extinct people. Although a new indigenous movement, the Khoisan National Consultative Council, contested this notion that the people of South Africa's "first nation" were extinct, their absence in the present seemed important to this recovery of the past. Evoking the past for the present meant bringing the dead back to life.

As Thabo Mbeki dedicated South Africa to this revival of the past, the dead bore different meanings — natural, ancestral, and universal — that all warranted allegiances that were simultaneously South African and human, African and universal.

First, the new national symbols were natural. More specifically, they were media for revitalizing an indigenous harmony between human beings and the natural environment. By embracing these symbols, as Thabo Mbeki asserted, South Africans would be able to "embrace the indigenous belief systems of our people, by demonstrating our respect for the relationship between people and nature, which for millions of years has been fundamental to our self-understanding of our African condition."

Second, the new national symbols were ancestral, drawing South Africans back into the pre-colonial era when Africans built their lives, homes, social relations, and political organization on the enduring relations between the living and their ancestors. The new national symbolism, as Mbeki explained, "recollects the times when our people believed that there was a force permeating nature which linked the living with the dead."

Third, the new national symbolism was universal, with significance for all humanity, as Mbeki asserted, since it "pays tribute to our land and our continent as the cradle of humanity, as the place where human life first began." Following the "out of Africa hypothesis," supported by scientific evidence from human genetics to the fossil record, President Thabo Mbeki could link the birth of the new South Africa with the evolutionary origin of all human beings. Accordingly, South Africa's new national symbolism was specifically African but also profoundly universal.

The new national policy for religion and education was aligned with this nation-building project. Explicitly, it referred to national initiatives in recovering the religious heritage of the past, respecting the religious diversity of the present, and searching for common ground in drawing South Africa's many religious communities into building a future. Although its theoretical arguments and pedagogical recommendations set out purely educational aims and objects, by contrast to the religious interests promoted by the apartheid regime, this new policy for religion education could not help but resonate with a range of national projects for a society in transition.

National Heritage

In a variety of media, the post-apartheid state has sought to renegotiate relations with the past. "Heritage" has often served as the overarching term for these transactions. Preserving heritage, as we have seen, was part of the rationale of the new policy for religion and education (art. 7). Signifying a useable past, heritage has been the subject of extensive research, delving into its theory and practice (Coombes 2003; Hall 2006; Rassool 2000; Shepherd 2006). In South Africa, heritage has also been formally managed by government institutions, including the Department of Arts and Culture, the National Heritage Council, and the South African Heritage Agency, and aggressively mobilized by tourism, marketing, advertising, and other entrepreneurial ventures (Witz, Rassool and Minkley 2001). Both state and market, operating through this heritage nexus, are dealing in the sacred.

If we adopt Emile Durkheim's simple definition of the sacred as that which is "set apart" (Durkheim 1995:44), we must also recognize the ways in which the sacred is "set apart" at the center of social relations, providing highly-charged terms for both social cohesion and social conflict. This ambivalence of the sacred — set apart but central — is a crucial feature of the political economy of the sacred in nation building. Linking the production of nations to characteristic patterns and processes in the history of religions, the French Marxist Régis Debray argued that a nation is made out of sacred stuff. As Debray proposed:

> We should not become obsessed by the determinate historical form of the nation-state but try to see what that form is made out of. It is created from a natural organization proper to *homo sapiens*, through which life itself is rendered untouchable or sacred. This sacred character constitutes the real national question. (Debray 1977:26)

In specifying the sacred substance of the national question, Debray pointed explicitly to two "anti-death processes," the production of sacred time and sacred space. In the first case, the national question depends upon "a delimitation of time, or the assignation of origins." Like Mircea Eliade, who documented the "myth of the eternal return" in the history of religions, Debray observed that the mythic temporal origin, the "zero point or starting point is what allows ritual repetition,

the ritualization of memory," with ritual reenactment "signifying defeat of the irreversibility of time." In the second instance, the national question depends upon the "delimitation of an enclosed space." Within the highly charged confines of that delimited sacred space, whether a sacred site, environment, or territory, national interests intersect with "an encounter with the sacred." The national question, according to Debray, raises the problem of the precise location of "a sacred space within which divination could be undertaken" (Debray 1977:26–27). In the production of sacred space and places, meaning and power coalesce; the national question is answered in the ritualization of memory and the divination of a shared future. In South Africa, this link between memory and future has been crucial to the formation of different religious nationalisms.

Looking at heritage projects of the post-apartheid state, which have consecrated new sites of national significance, we must remember that South Africa provides a historical laboratory for studying the production of sacred sites for failed nationalisms. Obviously, the Voortrekker Monument, which celebrated a militant, white Afrikaner nationalism in its political ascendancy after the seizure of power by the National Party in 1948 under the slogan of apartheid, now remains standing as a monument to a failed nationalism but also as a privatized (although partially state-subsidized) tourist attraction (Crampton 2001; Delmont 1993; Grundlingh 2001). But the apartheid regime, with its plan to create separate black nations outside of the white Republic of South Africa, generated other sacred national shrines, such as *Ntaba ka Ndoda* in the Republic of the Ciskei, where all who lived in this Bantustan were supposed to go on pilgrimage to swear their allegiance to this fictional nation (Hogdson 1987; see Chidester 1992:204–212). Against this background, South Africans might be skeptical about such state-driven efforts to create sacred places for the intersection of personal subjectivity and national unity.

Nevertheless, building a new nation involved building new sacred sites. The most prominent sites in the sacred geography of post-apartheid South Africa were created to transform pain into power. They marked sites of trauma — political imprisonment, racialized displacement, brutal repression and violence — in a patriotism of pain. But all of these sites were reclaimed and reinterpreted as shrines for national

healing. Prisons, in the case of Robben Island off the Cape Coast and the Old Fort Prison in Johannesburg, were dramatically transformed. Robben Island became a shrine to Nelson Mandela, a memorial to all who had fought, suffered, and died in the struggle against apartheid, and a theme park for tourists, mainly international tourists, to be initiated into the redemptive narrative of a new South Africa (Corsane 2006; Deacon 1998, 2004; Shackley 2001; Tunbridge 2005). Johannesburg's Old Fort Prison, known as Prison Number Four, where many political prisoners who later became leaders of the new government were incarcerated and tortured, was transformed into the precincts of Constitution Hill, where South Africa's Constitutional Court presides over a new domain of democratic values and human rights (Constitution Hill Foundation 2006; Gevisser 2004). While Robben Island and Constitution Hill have transformed pain into power, even executive, legislative, and judicial power, other sites have mediated painful memory as a path towards recovery. Cape Town's District Six Museum, which stands as a memorial to people who were forced out of their homes by the previous regime, has developed into a community museum in which displaced people can participate in the memory-work of recovering what apartheid had tried to erase (McEachern 2001; Rassool 2006a, 2006b; Rassool and Prosalendis 2001). In Soweto, the Hector Pieterson Memorial, supported by a national museum, recalls the memory, and loss, of the student uprising in 1976, but integrates that pain into the powerful narrative of national redemption in a democratic South Africa (Marschall 2006; Simbao 2007).

All of these sites, we must notice, were found sites, places already saturated with significance that could be transformed from sites of pain into powerful places for nation building. By contrast, the large-scale heritage project, Freedom Park, was built out of nothing, a new development on vacant land, which was carefully constructed to draw sacred resources into a monumental, memorial, and ritual complex. Like the national policy for religion and education, Freedom Park undertook the challenge, as announced in it promotional brochure, of "interpreting the past, informing the present, imagining the future" (Freedom Park Trust 2007).

Intentionally positioning the present between a very deep past and an open future, Freedom Park created an extraordinary historical depth,

invoking both fossil records and DNA evidence to embed the origin of South Africa in primordial time, 3.6 billion years ago, at the origin of everything. The history of South Africa, in this rendering, certainly did not begin, as apartheid-era textbooks might have claimed, in 1652 with the arrival of European colonizers; South African history began at the dawn of time. Pre-colonial history, therefore, was dramatically recast as a myth of origin, the origin of all human beings in the South African "cradle of humanity," as Freedom Park enshrined this "story of southern Africa's 3.6 billion years of history" (Freedom Park Trust 2007). In its memorial architecture and museum displays, Freedom Park asserted that South Africa's heritage could be traced back to the beginning of humanity, and all humanity could be traced back to South Africa.

Grounded in this myth of origin, Freedom Park was dedicated to memorializing all who had sacrificed their lives in the struggle for humanity and freedom. Arguably, the first hominids had struggled for humanity, so they should be included in this story. But the struggle for human freedom against dehumanizing forces was at the heart of the narrative that informed Freedom Park's commemoration of the dead. Within the precincts of Freedom Park, a ceremonial center, *Sikhumbuto* (a Swazi term for a sacred site to remember, invoke, and mobilize the assistance of ancestors), with a Wall of Names, an Eternal Flame, and a Sanctuary, was designed "as a permanent space to celebrate and commemorate the struggle for humanity and freedom" (Freedom Park Trust 2007).

In recasting time, history, and memory, Freedom Park enshrined a ceremonial management of sacred space. At its center, the shrine, *Isivivane*, was a pile of stones, gathering together stones from all of South Africa's provinces, with the addition of stones representing the nation, the region, and the international African diaspora. In many indigenous Southern African traditions, such a pile of stones was used in rituals of transition, when a person might add a stone if embarking on a journey or returning home (Chidester 1996:261–62). At Freedom Park, however, *Isivivane* was constructed to exercise centripetal force, drawing the entire nation, the region, and perhaps even the African diaspora home to South Africa. Moving out from this sacred center, Freedom Park also exercised a centrifugal force by sponsoring and sending out interreligious delegations to all of the provinces and neighboring

countries of South Africa to perform rituals of cleansing, healing, and reconciliation.

As President Thabo Mbeki observed, Freedom Park was "the most ambitious heritage project of the democratic government" (Freedom Park Trust 2007). As a new sacred site, created out of nothing but memory and imagination, Freedom Park's ambitions were enormous, encompassing 3.6 billion years and drawing the entire world into its orbit. However, Freedom Park, as a state initiative in heritage, was being designed and constructed in the midst of a wide range of independent, entrepreneurial, and corporate ventures in the field of heritage. Accordingly, national unity, as configured by Freedom Park, competed with this diversity of market-driven enterprises.

Tourism, of course, marketed heritage, with indigenous cultural villages, some revived from the apartheid era, but some recently created for the "rainbow nation" of the new South Africa, such as the Rainbow Culture Village, producing new tribal displays for the tourist market (Schutte 2003). Advertising jumped on the new national bandwagon, not only through electronic media, but also through creating new sacred sites, such as South African Brewery's World of Beer in Johannesburg, which was designed by consultants from Atlanta's World of Coca-Cola to align a brand of beer with a new national narrative, from indigenous African origins to an open African future (Mager 2005, 2006). Casinos, which had been such an integral engine of the apartheid regime, with a casino in every black homeland, while gambling was illegal in Christian South Africa, also mobilized new resources for heritage. During the apartheid era, a casino, such as the Lost City, was already a heritage theme park, "conjured out of the myths and legends of Africa," built on the "Sacred River," with an erupting volcano that created an "awe-inspiring experience," which ultimately led to the "Hall of Treasures" (Hall 1995; Hall and Bombardella 2005). Casinos, therefore, were well positioned to capitalize on new opportunities for thematic productions of national heritage.

In the post-apartheid South Africa, with new casino licenses at stake, one consortium bidding for a license in Johannesburg's Gold Reef City, already a theme park dedicated to the mining industry, promised it would create a "Park of Freedom," which can be seen in retrospect to incorporate many of the features of the eventual design of Freedom

Park. However, after the gambling license was granted, the plan for this park was recast as a museum. But its scope was also dramatically recast. Instead of encompassing all of human history, this museum only recounted the ordeals of apartheid from 1948, and instead of extending out into the entire world, this museum only dealt with life in and around Johannesburg during that period (Bonner 2004). Although such a narrowing of focus might still serve national interests in "controlling consensus" (Teeger and Vinitzky-Seroussi 2007), this new site, the Apartheid Museum, showed the importance of localizing the nation and the power of grounding a national narrative of unity in the specificity of identity and difference in a particular place.

South Africa's most prominent weekly publication, *The Sunday Times*, embarked upon a heritage initiative that best captures the potential for finding national unity, not in uniformity, but in the diversity of sites, perhaps sacred sites, of South African history (Sunday Times 2007; see Bauer 2007). The Sunday Times Heritage Project, which commissioned artists to create memorials all over the country, with the ambition of securing forty sites by the end of 2007, was explicitly aligned with the nation-building project of Freedom Park. But its orientation in time and space was entirely different, since it sought to memorialize a heritage that was decentralized and dispersed through a diversity of cultural memory. Music, for example, carried memory, which was commemorated in the project's first memorial, to the singer Brenda Fassie, but also in its memorial to the song, "Manenberg," which was erected outside of the studio in which the song had been recorded. Both of these memorials were interactive. While visitors could sit next to Brenda Fassie in a memorial site modeled on the John Lennon bench in Havana, Cuba, pilgrims to the Manenberg site, which featured an artwork of seven tubes, could hit those tubes with a wooden mallet and play out the first seven notes of the song. Both of these sites were national, commemorating a singer who was a national icon and a song that was a national anthem, but the national question in both of these memorials was raised as an invitation for personal interaction and connection.

As advanced by *The Sunday Times*, heritage was a national heritage, but it was also the specific creativity of music, sports, literature, art, and even oppositional religious sacrifice, as enshrined by the memorial to the Bulhoek massacre of African Christians in 1921, which resisted assimilation into a single national narrative. This heritage project also

hinted at the possibility of national counter-narratives by creating a memorial in Soweto for Tsietsi Mashinini, the forgotten leader of the uprisings of 1976. At every memorial it erected, the Sunday Times Heritage Project found national significance, but it also found rich resonances that transcended any national project.

Contrasts can easily be drawn between Freedom Park, the most ambitious national heritage project of the post-apartheid state, and the corporate-media heritage project of *The Sunday Times*. Freedom Park, as we have seen, was dramatically centralized, with a time depth of mythic proportions and a spatial extension that was potentially global in scope. The forty memorial sites selected by *The Sunday Times*, however, were decentralized and dispersed, spread out throughout the country, but with a time depth, coinciding with a corporate centenary, that only went back to the founding of the newspaper in 1906. While Freedom Park sought to enshrine a single narrative of the struggle for humanity and freedom, the Sunday Times Heritage Project commemorated multiple narratives, embedded in local histories, which could be variously interpreted by the artists commissioned to create the memorials for each site.

Nevertheless, both of these projects, like all the other state-driven and market-driven initiatives in heritage, were engaged in what Henry A. Giroux has called public pedagogy, situated outside the classroom, but pursuing an educational mission in teaching the public. Pedagogical practices, as Giroux has reminded us, "are not restricted to schools, blackboards, and test taking." Teaching is undertaken and learning takes place "within a wide variety of social institutions and formats including sports and entertainment media, cable television networks, churches and channels of elite and popular culture, such as advertising" (Giroux 2004:498). All of this might be regarded as informal education, perhaps, but it is thoroughly formulated and formalized within a variety of media and a range of social institutions that are engaged in public pedagogy by conveying information but also by shaping sentiments and sensibilities.

The Expanding Classroom

As I have argued, South Africa's new policy for religion and education was indexed to a broader range of initiatives in celebrating linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity while forging national unity. Accordingly,

religion education was introduced into the curriculum within an expanding classroom, a classroom that was more inclusive because it created space for teaching and learning about a variety of religious ways of life and protected students from discrimination on the basis of religion (see Engelbrecht and Green 2007). But the expanding classroom was also more extensive because it extended outside of the public school by linking up with a new public pedagogy of national heritage that addressed South Africans as a "learning nation," committed to "life-long learning," taking up the challenge of internalizing and actualizing the promise of the national motto, "unity in diversity."

Within the school curriculum, these educational objectives were advanced by new approaches to citizenship education that responded to the more inclusive South African citizenship (Enslin 2003). As part of the subject area, Life Orientation, religion education, along with anti-racist, anti-sexist, and human-rights education, was designed to contribute to the formation of post-apartheid citizens for a new South Africa. At the same time, extending outside the formal education of the public school classroom, a range of heritage institutions, especially museums, monuments, and memorials, also took up this educational challenge. Museums, for example, were faced with the dual mandate of contributing to the "creation of a new national identity" (Nanda 2004) and finding new ways to creatively respond to the "challenges of diversity" (Omar 2005). National monuments, under the authority of South Africa's National Monuments Council, had to be recast in the light of post-apartheid national citizenship. Especially in the case of "controversial existing monuments," the council reported in 1994, considerable work had to be undertaken "to stress an inclusive historical interpretation of the facts and to strive through the educational process to change people's perceptions" (Prins et al. 1994:8). Memorials, whether found, rediscovered, or newly constructed, were also instrumental in this educational process. In the expanding classroom, therefore, museums, monuments, memorials, and other heritage sites extended the public pedagogy of "unity in diversity."

Critics have identified problems with this public pedagogy. I focus here on two problems — the manufacture of consensus and the privileging of the extraordinary — that also have implications for teaching and learning about religion in schools.

First, South Africa's new public pedagogy has been criticized for creating an artificial uniformity in which difference, disagreement, and debate are buried under scripted narratives and framed imagery for creating consensus (Teeger and Vinitzky-Seroussi 2007). New national narratives, drawing on powerful images of non-racial rainbowism or African Renaissance, have been deployed in a variety of ways to create a sense of social cohesion. Public holidays and public memorials, orchestrating new orientations in time and space, have also been mobilized in efforts to form a new public consensus about the new South Africa's continuity with the past and uniformity in the present. These national initiatives, which novelist Ivan Vladislavic has called "propaganda by monuments" (Graham 2007), reinforce an imaginary uniformity.

In working out a curriculum and pedagogy for religion education in schools, this criticism needs to be taken seriously. Clearly, the national policy intends "unity without uniformity." But pressures of public pedagogy might force the curriculum for religion education to stress the underlying similarity of all religions in forming personal identity, transmitting moral values, and facilitating mutual recognition in a shared society. In the process, creative and critical thinking about the multiplicity of religious identities and the negotiation of religious differences might be subsumed in the artificial manufacture of consensus.

If religion education is going to resist these pressures for artificial uniformity, then its pedagogical approach will have to be more like the heritage project of *The Sunday Times*, decentralized and dispersed, than like the national heritage fixed in time and space at Freedom Park. As historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith has argued, introducing students to religion should proceed not through grand narratives but through illuminating instances, *exempli gratia*, which provide raw and real material for creative and critical thinking (Smith 1988). In such an approach, religion education can be based on a unified and coherent educational project without seeking national or religious uniformity.

Second, South Africa's new public pedagogy has been criticized for focusing on extraordinary events of heroism, sacrifice, and loss. Extraordinary sites, such as national memorials, might inspire, but they also can overshadow or even erase the meaning of everyday, ordinary places. In advancing public pedagogy, the creative and critical analysis

of everyday spaces, such as a shopping mall, can be just as useful in achieving the educational outcomes of citizenship education as a school visit to a national museum or national monument (Crowley and Matthews 2006; see Worden 1996). Arguably, a pedagogy of the ordinary might be even more effective in achieving educational objectives than any "propaganda by monuments."

Here also religion education needs to heed this critique by resisting the privileging of the extraordinary. In the familiar and pervasive model of "world religions," all religions, by definition, are constituted by the extraordinary, by extraordinary revelations or hierophanies, all recorded in an extraordinary library of sacred texts. While this privileging of the extraordinary has distorted the character of religious life, it has forcefully excluded indigenous religious forms of life from the world of religions.

Fortunately, religion education does not depend upon such a model of world religions. As this framing of the world of religions has been critiqued, deconstructed, and abandoned in the history of religions (Masuzawa 2005; Chidester 2008), it has also been overcome in religion and education. A variety of pedagogical approaches, interpretive (Jackson 1997), dialogical (Weisse and Knauth 1997), and participatory (Chidester 1997), have long ago gone beyond the structures and constrictions of the model of world religions. For all their difference, these methods have in common an impetus to recover and reimagine the ordinary as the basis for teaching and learning about religion and religions.

By locating South Africa's new policy for religion and education in the context of public pedagogy, we can gain a broader perspective on religious opposition to the policy. The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), along with other groupings that identified themselves as "Concerned Christians," opposed religion education by alleging that it established a uniform multi-religious religion (or, alternatively, that it established a uniform anti-religious religion of secular humanism) and thereby undermined the decentralized role of local schools in determining their own particular and distinctive religious ethos. Although Christian opponents of the new policy invoked religious concerns, they also became expert at arguing within the new constitutional space, which guaranteed freedom from religious discrimination and freedom for reli-

gious expression (Chidester 2006). The new policy, Christian critics argued, violated the provisions of both the Bible and the new South African Constitution. However, South Africa's policy for religion and education did not establish a uniform religion nor discriminate against local religious commitments, because it was only concerned with clarifying the educational principles and objectives for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity. Nevertheless, Christian opponents of the policy insisted that anything that touched their religion was religious.

Representatives of these Christian interests also opposed national heritage projects. Turning from the school curriculum to public pedagogy, the African Christian Democratic Party attacked Freedom Park, insisting that its ritualization of memory and healing was anti-Christian. In March 2004, this Christian party issued a press release stating that it would not participate in any activities organized by Freedom Park because "we stand adamantly opposed to efforts to impose an interfaith religion on the people of South Africa." Instead of looking back to the past, according to the ACDP, the people of South Africa should look forward to Jesus, who "alone can provide us with an identity and hope, restoring a people and bringing true unity and liberty." In the meantime, these politicized Christians were committed to resisting any initiatives, whether in the national curriculum of the public school or the national heritage of public pedagogy, that were contrary to their specific Christian understanding of the world. From their perspective, the expanding classroom, in both public schools and public arena, in the new national policy for religion and education and in the new national heritage project in Freedom Park, were "determined to bind the people of South Africa to demonic altars" (Dudley 2004).

In similar terms, we have seen Christian educators, such as the University of South Africa's Professor of Education, Irmhild H. Horn, opposing South Africa's national policy for religion and education on the grounds that such an open approach to teaching and learning about religion and religions will expose students to demonic possession (Horn 2003). Opponents of religion education, therefore, have linked the public school with public pedagogy, demonizing both national projects in the name of a certain kind of Christianity. Neither the park nor the policy was religious in any conventional sense. But both were engaged

by the ACDP and other "concerned Christians" as if they posed religious challenges to Christianity. Therefore, both registered as "religious" from this religious perspective.

South Africa's expanding classroom requires critical reflection on the role of religion, spirituality, and the sacred in a constitutional democracy. Guaranteeing freedom for religion (and freedom from discrimination on the basis of religion), the South African Constitution established a "cooperative" model for engaging religion within the framework of a secular state (Van der Vyver 2001; Du Plessis 2001). Although state and religion are separate, the state has established consultative mechanisms, from the National Religious Leaders Forum to the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Linguistic, Cultural, and Religious Rights, which give scope for cooperation between religious communities and the state. While seeking to include all of South Africa's many religious communities in the public school classroom and public institutions, the post-apartheid state has also generated national symbols, mythic narratives, and ritualized practices that bear traces of the sacred.

Understanding this political economy of the sacred requires interdisciplinary resources, especially the resources that are being drawn together under the umbrella of heritage studies. The history of religions, with its expertise in analyzing sacred traditions, spatial orientations, and temporal processes, has a significant role to play in this work.

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Didactics of the Study of Religions

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Abstract

In contrast to well-established didactics of theologies, the study of religions, even though its field is becoming more and more important in schools and elsewhere in society, has not yet developed a didactic branch. This article outlines and exemplifies three tasks for didactics of the study of religions: (1) analysis of models of education about religion/s, (2) development of concepts for education about religion/s, (3) engagement in practical issues related to education about religion/s, including participation in political and public debates about religion, religious plurality, education, and religious education. Tasks 1 and 2, which may be called "inner-academic," are exemplified with research results from my study about integrative religious education in Europe. Task 3, relating to the communication of academic insights beyond academia, is regarded as a necessary complement to "inner-academic" work. In conclusion, it is argued that in order to develop didactics of the study of religions it is necessary to combine the subject knowledge and methodologies of the study of religions with insights from education. Rather than leaving this educational task to educationalists with little knowledge of our subject, the study of religions needs to establish its own didactics with respect to various educational contexts.

Introduction: The Discipline of the Study of Religions and Religious Education

The importance of learning about different religions in school contexts has been acknowledged recently in different parts of the world (e.g.

Chidester 2003; Jackson 2004; Jensen 2007).[1] The academic discipline of the study of religions, however, has shown little interest in the representation of religions in schools and has left this field primarily to theologians or other people with an interest in school RE, who do not have a professional background in the study of religions (cf. Jensen 2002; Alberts 2007:2–5). The absence of didactics of the study of religions, in combination with the general lack of recognition of the study of religions in the public sphere (Rudolph 2000:241; McCutcheon 2000:168), has resulted in the fact that the discipline of the study of religions, until very recently, has often not been considered an adequate partner for teaching about religion in schools.[2] However, education about religion and religions,[3] in schools and elsewhere, is related to the very subject matter of the study of religions. Other than religious education (RE) organised by religious communities, education about religions in secular frameworks is a direct field of application for the discipline of the study of religions. Ideally, the study of religions can offer an impartial framework for the study of different religions also in schools, or at least attempt to apply an impartial approach and discuss openly the problems related to this task. Furthermore, the analytical and discursive competence of the study of religions with respect to fields like religion, religious plurality, worldviews and values is needed also outside universities. It can serve to make basic distinctions, for example, between religious and secular approaches to religious diversity,[4] and help to deal sensitively with questions of representation as well as presuppositions and agendas behind different approaches to religion.

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[1] For this topic, see also the article by Robert Jackson in this issue.

[2] It should be added, however, that there are prominent exceptions. A well-known example is Ninian Smart's influence on religious education in England.

[3] In this context, "religion" (in the singular) is not to be misunderstood as an essentialised notion of religion, but serves as a generic term denoting a diversity of phenomena. "Religions" (in the plural) may be used in order to emphasise that this subject matter is characterised by plurality. The plural, however, may not be mistaken for a narrow conception of the subject matter as institutionalised "religions" only, disregarding other phenomena.

[4] In my use of the distinction between "religious" and "secular" I follow Jensen and Rothstein 2000:7–8, referring to Geertz (2000a:21) in the same volume, who argues for a "non-sectarian, non-religious study of religion" based upon "methods,

In order to enter the relevant educational debates and fields related
to school education about religions, the study of religions needs to
develop didactics. There is a difference between starting to think from
a particular model of RE, asking what the study of religions may con-
tribute to it, and starting to think from the discipline of the study of
religions, asking what it has to offer for school education about reli-
gions, in general as well as in specific contexts. This article is an attempt
to do the latter. For this purpose, three tasks for didactics of the study
of religions are outlined: (1) analysis of existing models of education
about religion, (2) development of concepts for education about reli-
gion, and (3) engagement in practical issues related to education about
religions. It is argued that we need to deal with these tasks within the
academic study of religions, rather than delegating them to education-
alists from other academic backgrounds.

1. Analysis of Existing Models of Education about Religion

Education about religion and religious plurality takes place in various
contexts. Recently, the study of different religions has become an ele-
ment of school education in more and more countries (Jackson 2004).
An important presupposition for the study of religions to find its own
position among the variety of approaches to teaching and learning
about religion in schools is an analysis and critique of existent models
from a study-of-religions point of view. In which contexts does learning
about different religions take place? What are the epistemological
frameworks in which religion and religious plurality are discussed?
Starting from the general character of the academic discipline of the
study of religions, a distinction between religious and secular educa-
tional contexts is crucial. If the study of religions is understood as
a secular discipline which does not support any religious position
over another, it cannot — neither at school nor at university levels —

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theories and models developed in the human and social sciences." Even though it may
ultimately be arguable, this distinction is important for a first orientation in the field
of religious education, where a distinction between religious and secular approaches to
education about religions is crucial. For an account of the general problems concerning
the concept "secular," see Brittain's (2005) discussion of Talal Asad's rejection of it.

advocate any religious approach to religion. Therefore, while RE offered by religious communities is an interesting field of study, the study of religions as a discipline cannot actively support it, as this would mean to support the particular religious community which offers it. However, if education about religions is offered in secular educational frameworks (for example, universities, schools, or museums), independently from education within religious communities, the study of religions comes into focus as the academic discipline to which this kind of RE is most closely related. This latter kind of RE can be regarded as a direct field of application for didactics of the study of religions.

Models of Education about Religion and Religious Plurality in Europe: Integrative vs. Separative

Much has been written about the landscape of religious education in Europe (e.g. Schreiner 2000, 2005; Jensen 1999, 2005; Willaime 2007a). Generally, "religious education" is regarded as a generic term, which includes all kinds of education into, about and from religion — from confessional instruction within religious traditions to secular education programmes about different religions at public educational institutions. In this wide field, keeping in mind our interest in didactics of the study of religions, is it helpful to concentrate on the question of how teaching and learning about *different* religions takes place in schools in Europe. This allows a more focused study of the different frameworks for our particular field of interest: the representation of religious plurality in school education about religion.

If we approach the broad field of RE with the question how teaching and learning about different religions takes place, the common distinction between "confessional" and "non-confessional" RE may be supplemented with another distinction. From an educational point of view, it is useful to distinguish between *integrative* and *separative* approaches to education about religion (Alberts 2006:267, 2007:324). Integrative approaches to education about religion are designed for groups of pupils with various religious or non-religious backgrounds. Independently from their or their parents' religious or non-religious orientation, pupils learn together about religion, religions and religious diversity. In separative approaches, by contrast, pupils are separated according to their or their parents' religious orientation. Pupils who do

not belong to any of the religious groups that offer religious education at their school, may normally either choose an alternative secular subject, like "ethics" (e.g. in some federal states of Germany) or "philosophies of life" (e.g. in Norway before integrative RE was introduced), or they may take part in religious education of a religious community to which they do not belong. Thus, in separative approaches, teaching and learning about different religions takes place in separate groups. It is organised by religious communities in cooperation with schools and educational institutions (i.e. "confessional RE") or, for the children who do not wish to participate in confessional RE, in an additional alternative subject.

In Europe,[5] integrative religious education is sometimes included in school curricula as an individual school subject, for example, *religionskunskap* (literally: knowledge about religion) in Sweden, *religious education* in England, *kristendoms- religions- och livssynskunnskap* (KRL, literally: knowledge about Christianity, religions and views of life) in Norway, *Religion und Kultur* (religion and culture) in the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland, or *religion* in the Danish upper secondary school.[6] In some other countries, integrative religious education appears as a learning dimension of other school subjects like history or geography. This is, for example, the case in France, where the responsibility of the school for the communication of knowledge about religions has been acknowledged quite recently (Debray 2002; Willaime 2007b), or in many schools in the Netherlands, where the compulsory learning area *geestelike stromingen* (spiritual traditions) is often realised as an aspect of other school subjects rather than in a subject of its own (Westermann 1996; Avest, Bakker et al. 2007). Separative religious education can be found, for example, in schools in Belgium, Finland and Germany. In the separative approach, teaching about different religions and worldviews is regarded as a part of confessional religious education or the above-mentioned secular alternative subjects.

Educational justifications for integrative vs. separative models of education about religion differ considerably. Arguments for integrative

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[5] For an evaluation of approaches to education about religion in Australia and South Africa, see the articles of Goldburg and Chidester in this issue.

[6] See the articles by Jensen, Revell and Frank and Bochinger in this issue for more information on integrative RE in Denmark, England and Switzerland.

approaches emphasise the importance of learning together to deal with differences and religious diversity, often from primary or even preschool levels,[7] and frequently regard integrative RE as a cornerstone of education in secular democracies (Hull 2002; Hartmann 2000:230). Arguments for separative religious education, including separative education about different religions, tend to start from a religious perspective on education. Religions, and in particular the established Christian churches, are regarded as indispensable sources of value also in so-called "secular" societies. Therefore, religious instruction or "confessional RE" has its place in state schools (see e.g. Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 1996; Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 1994).

However, as religious freedom includes the right not to participate in religious activities, alternative subjects for those children who do not belong to an established religion which organises RE in schools have been introduced. The original idea behind these subjects is to communicate values also to non-religious children who do not attend confessional RE. Therefore, these alternative subjects normally do not have the word "religion" in their title,[8] and the idea is that they deal with values, philosophy and related topics minus everything that has to do with religion.[9]

When it comes to the study of *different religions* as part of the school curriculum, the inconsistencies of the separative approach, which reduces school religious education to a kind of religious and moral instruction, within secular educational systems becomes apparent. If the study of different religions is integrated in the separative approach to RE, representatives of the religious communities responsible for RE are given authority not only to teach their own religion, but also to teach about other religions from their religious point of view, even if they have only little or no academic knowledge about other religions than their own. If there is no additional non-confessional integrative RE, children will only learn about other religions from the perspective of the religious community whose RE they attend. Furthermore, when

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[7] For a study of integrative religious education at preschool levels, see Dommel 2007.

[8] For example, "Werte und Normen" (values and norms) in Lower Saxony, Germany.

[9] For an analysis of the position of the secular alternative subjects to confessional RE in Germany, see Lott 1998:46–53.

it comes to communicating knowledge about different religions, even alternative subjects can no longer leave out "religion" and deal only with philosophies and secular ideologies, which the separative approach has allocated to them. Therefore, the study of different religions has been given teaching time in most alternatives to RE and a study of different religions has recently been integrated in teacher training programmes for these alternative subjects, so that these now provide some space for teaching and learning about different religions. However, in confessional RE, which is still regarded as the norm in separative approaches, learning about religious diversity from teachers who have actually studied different religions in depth and have acquired theoretical and methodological knowledge about dealing with religious diversity is not possible (cf. Alberts 2007:347–352; Jensen 2002).

Integrative Religious Education

In contrast to separative-confessional education about religion, which, as part of the activities of a religious community, is an object of study but not a field of application for the academic study of religions, integrative religious education can be regarded as a direct field of application.[10] In secular state schools, if freedom of and from religion is respected, integrative RE involves a study of different religions from a non-religious point of view. It is designed for pupils with various religious and non-religious backgrounds. Therefore, like in the academic study of religions, the general framework for integrative RE cannot be religious, but needs to start from a secular (though, of course, not secularist) educational approach to religious diversity, which does not privilege any religious perspective.

   An analysis of existing models of integrative religious education may serve to identify important factors for the development of didactics of the study of religions. Apart from the key content-related issues, the organisational frameworks for integrative RE need to be considered. What kind of external factors shape the subject? In order to answer this

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[10] "Alternative subjects," as micro-integrative models within a generally separative approach, may be included in the study of integrative RE, even though it has to be kept in mind that these are not truly integrative (i.e. for all children of a class), but are designed for the non-religious "rest."

question it is necessary to study the general legal and organisational frameworks, including international conventions, constitutions, school laws and regulations. With respect to the general character and the contents of the subject, the following issues seem particularly important: aims of integrative RE, the notion of religion, the representation of religions, and the notion of education. A study of these issues involves research referring to different methodologies and sources. The study of written and material sources includes, for example, legal documents, syllabuses, course outlines for teacher training, academic concepts for integrative RE, and teaching material. Furthermore, the non-academic discourse about integrative RE, including statements by politicians and representatives of religious communities in various media, is an important field of analysis, as it tends to be more influential in public discourse than scholarly contributions. Empirical research about integrative RE involves, for example, observations in fields like teacher training, classroom research, and interviews with various agents related to the subject, including teachers and pupils.

In my own research, I have analysed written sources (including regulations, syllabuses, academic literature and textbooks) related to integrative RE in Europe, with a particular emphasis on England and Sweden, which both have a long tradition of integrative RE as an ordinary school subject from primary (and partly even preschool) to secondary school levels (see Alberts 2006, 2007).

The organisational frameworks for integrative RE in England and Sweden differ considerably. In England, despite recent tendencies towards centralisation and standardisation in the educational system and RE (UK Parliament 1988; SCAA 1994; QCA 2004), RE remains to a great extent a matter of local responsibility. The syllabuses are negotiated between representatives of religions and educational institutions. Thus, religious communities are regarded as important partners for integrative RE. The Church of England has a special position among the religious communities which are invited to contribute to the syllabus for a particular local area. It forms a group of its own in the agreed syllabus committee, while all other religious communities together are included in a second group. The third and fourth group are representatives of teachers and the local education authority. Since all four groups of the committee need to approve of an agreed syllabus for the local

area, the religious communities forming one of the groups, and the Church of England with its own group in particular, are given great responsibility for RE. In fact, they have the right of veto in curriculum development. The final decision about the syllabuses, and thus about the contents of RE, lies not with educationalists, but is negotiated between representatives of religions and educational institutions. Therefore, religious interpretations of religion and religious plurality (as opposed to secular educational positions) are frequently reflected in agreed syllabuses, despite the attempt to provide a framework for RE which is acceptable to pupils with various religious and non-religious backgrounds.[11]

In Sweden, by contrast, syllabuses for RE are a national matter. They are made by *Skolverket*, the National Agency of Education, just as the syllabuses for other school subjects. The individual religious communities are not part of the process of creating the syllabuses. The school subject *religionskunskap* is an ordinary obligatory secular school subject. Therefore, it has no special status in the general school curriculum. However, in Sweden and elsewhere, if religious communities are not formally taking part in the creation of syllabuses, this does not necessarily have to mean that they do not have any influence at all. Like in other matters, religious communities influence political and educational decisions in different ways, be it by lobbying or simply by the fact that important positions in the political or educational system are held by their members.[12]

Examples of the Notion of Religion and the Representation of Religions in Approaches to Integrative Religious Education

At the level of academic concepts for integrative RE, there is great diversity in England. There is no standard approach to RE, but different approaches influence RE in England in various ways, despite the rather uniform national framework and model syllabuses, which have also had an impact on the locally agreed syllabuses. Therefore, if we intend to analyse the notion of religion and representation of religions in English RE, we cannot speak of "the English model" in general, but need to

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[11] For this problem, see the article by Revell in this issue.
[12] For this issue in Norway, see Thomassen 2006:260.

study more closely the individual approaches. In the following, I would like to highlight the differences between three approaches to RE in England,[13] before I compare these to an influential Swedish model.

In the *experiential approach*, which is presented in a handbook for teachers (Hammond, Hay et al. 1990), religion is, like in the traditional phenomenology of religion, regarded as an expression of the experience of the sacred (ibid. 10). Like in Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1969 [1917]) an acknowledgement of one's own religious experience is regarded as a prerequisite for understanding other religions. The exercises suggested for RE aim at empathising with the "realm of religious experience" (Hammond, Hay et al. 1990:13). The study of individual empirical religions is not part of the learning model suggested in this approach. Rather, the experiential approach is seen as a compensation for the neglect of religious experience in the "world religions school," which is "unable to convey the fascination of a faith" and in which the affective dimension "is wholly ignored as the passion of belief is dispassionately presented" (ibid. 21). While the authors see a place for the "world religions school" in RE, which "ought to offer both the variety and openness of the descriptive approach and also some real sense of the spiritual experience which lies behind the wide spectrum of belief and practice," they regard their own approach as a contribution to that second, more "confessional" part of RE, as "it is this sense of experience which is essential if the real nature of religion is to be grasped" (ibid. 21). However, as the experience with similar positions by Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Heiler and others has shown, this approach to religion, which presupposes the universality of the holy behind all religious phenomena, is religious itself and, as a particular religious view on the plurality of religions, contradicts many other religious positions on that issue, let alone secular ones (Waardenburg 1992; McCutcheon 2000). Therefore, it can neither be the framework for the secular academic study of religions, nor for integrative RE as an ordinary subject for pupils with different religious and non-religious backgrounds, if religious freedom (in particular, the right to education from a non-religious point of view) is respected. In an integrative RE context, the

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[13] These three models are just a selection from influential approaches to RE in England. For an introduction to more approaches see Grimmitt 2000; Jackson 2004; and Alberts 2007.

project team's programme of "de-indoctrination" from the dominant secular paradigm in a society where "a kind of cultural brainwashing" tends to make people whose religious experience appears to contradict "official" reality suppress it (Hammond, Hay et al. 1990:15), in fact turns into a programme of re-indoctrination into another unquestioned paradigm, i.e. the religious position that the experience of "the sacred" lies at the heart of all religion.[14]

   A number of other approaches to integrative RE, which do not fall back into confessional positions, have been developed in the English context. They take into account the requirements of a mixed classroom, in which a religious position cannot be the framework for integrative RE. From a study-of-religions point of view, these approaches are not only interesting as an object of research, but also as models for the development of didactics of the study of religions. The *interpretive approach*, for example, developed at the University of Warwick by Robert Jackson and his team (e.g., Jackson 1997), shows impressively that education about religions from a non-religious point of view does by no means need to be "clinical or sterile," as the experiential approach implies (Hammond, Hay et al. 1990:21). The notion of religion and representation of religions in the interpretive approach build on a critique of the traditional phenomenology of religion (favouring Jacques Waardenburg's "new-style phenomenology"), a critical evaluation of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's distinction between "faith" and "tradition," and methods developed in recent social and cultural anthropology. Religion is studied on three interrelated levels: the individual, groups to which the individual belongs, and the wider religious tradition (Jackson 1997). A special focus of the interpretive approach is religion among children in Great Britain. Fieldwork among children of different religious backgrounds in Great Britain (for example, Nesbitt 2002) is used as a basis for textbooks for RE. In these textbooks, interpretive strategies are suggested by which the pupils may engage with the material, referring to individual children from a particular religious tradition in relation to the groups they belong to and the wider religious tradition. In this approach, the lives and ideas of children are given particu-

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[14] For a criticism of the experiential approach see also Mott-Thornton 1996; Wright 1996.

lar attention. Furthermore, in RE, the pupils are asked to relate what they have studied to their own lives. However, they are not asked to approach religious plurality from a religious point of view, but the framework for the representation of religions remains secular.

The interpretive approach offers interesting strategies of overcoming stereotypical representations of religions in RE. However, despite Robert Jackson's reflective use of the concept "world religion," the approach in general can be said to operate within a framework which still regards the constructs of "religious traditions" as the focus of reference, even if their internal diversity is acknowledged in the empirical study of individuals and membership groups (cf. Erricker 2000:30).[15] Children from particular "traditions" are selected for the textbooks about "Hindus," "Christians" or "Muslims." Replying to this criticism and recent debates about the notion of religion in the academic study of religions, Jackson, in his approach for RE, prefers a revised phenomenology, trying to portray religions in their own terms, connected by family resemblance and transcendental reference (Waardenburg 1978; Flood 1999), to postmodern deconstructions of "religion" or approaches which regard the study of religions as reducible to cultural studies (Fitzgerald 2000).[16]

Postmodern criticism of the notion of religion is taken up in another approach to RE in England, the *narrative approach* developed by Clive and Jane Erricker. Referring to Lyotard's pragmatics of narrative knowledge, Clive and Jane Erricker criticise the notion of "tradition" in RE contexts and regard the representation of religions in RE as the reproduction of the grand narratives that religious communities have produced about themselves. They identify the following as the principle question with regard to integrative RE: is "learning measured according to our knowledge and understanding of grand narratives; in the case of religious education these would be the belief systems Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc.," or do we "understand them as constructions with political purposes, in the context of which they make truth claims" (Erricker and Erricker 2000a:194)? In his analysis of

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[15] For a recent critique of the notion of "world religions," see Masuzawa 2005.
[16] This position was presented by Robert Jackson in his keynote lecture at the conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) in Bremen in September 2007. See also Jackson's contribution in this issue.

common practice of RE, Clive Erricker concludes that the way religions are represented in RE serves the interests of the ideological orthodox, conservative traditions. What is studied is what religious authorities wish to be acknowledged as representations of themselves. Thus, religious systems are often represented as intrinsically valuable. The metanarrative underpinning any such representation itself is, however, never contested (Erricker 2000:30–31). Erricker argues from an educational perspective that rather than continuing to reproduce maps of religions which act in the self-interest of orthodoxies and their truth claims, trying to gain hegemony over both deviance (heterodoxy) and secularity, it would be adequate to study from a meta-level what purposes the concepts "tradition" and "orthodoxy" serve (ibid. 32). This transformation of religious education into something broader would place it in a more appropriate educational perspective, which is concerned with human narratives rather than doxic truths or the teaching of "world religions," and thus make the subject inclusive rather than exclusive, and performative rather than reactive (Erricker and Erricker 2000b:131).

Contrary to England, where the general character of school religious education and its relation to moral and spiritual education, which is regarded as an aim of the school in general,[17] remains contested, the secular character of integrative RE is openly embraced in Sweden. In Sweden, the concepts *livsåskådning* (view of life) and *livstolkning* (interpretation of life) serve as a map of the subject matter for RE (Almén 2000; Hartmann 2000). Other than the term "world religions," which is rather prominent in English discourse about RE, the *livsåskådnings-*approach enables a more open concept of the field, including, for example, indigenous and new or smaller religions, religion beyond institutionalised religious systems and non-religious worldviews. Avoiding to put much emphasis on the religious vs. secular distinction (though not avoiding a study of the discussions about this distinction) helps to avoid a (religious) representation of religions as institutions of moral values which secular worldviews lack. Instead, religious and secular worldviews alike are studied with respect to ethical questions, which

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[17] Section 1.2 of the Education Reform Act states that the school in general should promote the "spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils" (UK Parliament 1988).

play a central role in Swedish RE, with a particular focus on contemporary issues and challenges (Skolverket 2000).

The above examples of concepts for integrative RE are concerned with the same kind of question: where to start from when we study religion/s in an educational framework? The examples show that, in school RE and elsewhere, inevitably we have to start to look at religions from one particular perspective. However, the first important distinction is between a religious starting point (like religious experience in the experiential approach), which is unacceptable for integrative RE within a secular educational framework, and a secular starting point (like the *livsåskådnings*-approach), which is needed for integrative RE. Even though the Swedish *livsåskådnings*-approach has its roots in liberal Protestant concepts of religion,[18] it is not itself a religious starting point for RE. Views of life can be studied empirically, contrary to the presupposed universality of the experience of the holy as main characteristic of "religion" in the experiential approach.[19] The concept *livsåskådning* helps to map a field of study for RE, but does not provide a distinction between religion and not-religion. On the contrary, it applies a functional approach to religion, without claiming to provide the essential characteristic of "religion." It can be supplemented with other approaches to religion or religions, which have emerged in different cultural contexts or in the study of other religions than Christianity. Furthermore, the concept *livsåskådning* can integrate the levels of different agents, including individuals, groups and institutions. Moreover, as a framework for RE, it may be flexible enough to integrate postmodern criticism of traditional notions of religion, and leave room for a critical study of the (meta-)narratives that religious institutions have produced about their "traditions."

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[18] For example, it resembles Paul Tillich's theory of religion which claims that religions provide answers to existential questions (Tillich 1956).

[19] Here the same kind of criticism applies which has been put forward against, for example, Rudolf Otto's, Friedrich Heiler's or Mircea Eliade's ideas about the universality of the holy as a basis of any religious experience. See e.g. McCutcheon 2000; Waardenburg 1992.

2. Development of Concepts for Education about Religion

The situation in Europe and elsewhere shows that various concepts for education about religion and religions exist. Traditionally, these concepts have been developed within religious traditions and present approaches to religious plurality from the perspective of a particular religious tradition. Recently, in countries where such a school subject exists, concepts for integrative religious education have been developed also outside religious communities, for example, in institutes of education. Frequently, concepts for integrative RE are some kind of compromise between religious perspectives on religious plurality and secular educational approaches. This is due to the fact that, normally, educationalists have little professional knowledge about religions and approach religious communities and their educational institutions in order to develop contents for integrative RE.[20]

The crucial question is, however, whether religious communities are the right partners for the development of concepts for secular integrative RE. From an educational perspective, it is important for the pupils to get to know the groups and worldviews that they are supposed to learn about. However, given the diversity of points of view on religion and religious diversity and the secular character of the subject, no religious position may determine the general character of integrative RE. Religious positions are the *object* of integrative RE, but cannot provide the framework for the representation of any religion, let alone religious diversity, in this school subject. Nevertheless, insider-accounts of their own tradition do have a place in integrative RE. They are part of the subject matter and need to be studied by the pupils. However, they may differ from other accounts of this tradition and, in particular, from non-religious approaches to that tradition. These tensions between different accounts of religion and religious diversity need to be studied in RE, if the subject is to serve the general emancipatory task of educational institutions which intend to educate responsible citizens. Therefore, a secular educational framework, with neither a religious nor an anti-religious agenda, is needed for integrative RE.

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[20] This is, for example, institutionalised in the procedure for the creation of syllabuses for RE in England. It is also the case in Germany when theologies are regarded as partners for the study of religions in the secular alternative subjects which are compulsory for pupils who do not take part in RE (cf. Lott 1998:48).

It took the institutionalised academic study of religions more than one-hundred years to distinguish between (explicitly or implicitly) religious and non-religious accounts of religion and this matter remains contested to this date (McCutcheon 2003; Jensen and Rothstein 2000; Fitzgerald 2000). It seems unlikely that educationalists designing concepts for integrative RE, without the help of the study of religions, will be able to find answers to the questions about an adequate notion of religion and representation of religions in only a few years. Due to the virtual absence of the study of religions in many debates about RE in secular societies, its knowledge about theory and methodology in the study and representation of different religions has only rarely been transferred to school contexts. Therefore, many approaches to religion in schools still build on a notion of religion which was popular in the academic study of religions in the first half of the 20th century, but has been found inappropriate in secular educational contexts.[21] Expertise in the study of religions is needed for education about religion also in schools. Therefore, the study of religions needs to develop concepts for school education about religion as a part of general didactics of the study of religions.

In the development of concepts for education about religion from a study-of-religions point of view, we may distinguish between two different kinds of concepts:

(a) Starting from an understanding of the study of religions as an academic discipline, independent from particular institutional contexts and restrictions, we need to develop concepts for education about religion/s independently from external factors: *didactics of the study of religions as it should be from an academic point of view*, based on research in the study of religions and education. We need to find a position towards didactics within our discipline. This is necessary also in order to help to further develop existing approaches so that they may approximate this ideal.

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[21] For example, a Swedish textbook for RE presents the universality of the holy, as proposed by Otto or Söderblom, as a starting point for the study of religions in school RE, see Rodhe and Nylund 1998:23–26.

(b) Since education about religions does not take place in the "ideal" surroundings which scholars of religion may imagine, it is, furthermore, necessary to develop concepts for education about religion/s in particular contexts, taking account of external factors like national or international regulations, constitutions, school laws etc.: *didactics of the study of religions as it can be in particular social and political contexts*. However, we need to keep in mind that these external factors are not universal natural laws. Constitutions, regulations, school laws etc. have been made by somebody, most likely without consultation with scholars of religion. It is another task for scholars in the study of religions to participate in the consultation processes that precede decisions shaping the external factors on which education about religion/s de facto depends.

(a) *Didactics of the Study of Religions as it Should be from an Academic Point of View*

Concepts for integrative RE which build on didactics of the study of religions are designed for secular educational contexts with mixed classes of pupils with various religious and non-religious backgrounds. The impartial approach to religions should be reflected in the name of the school subject, which means that this name should refer to religion or religions in general, without naming a particular religion and thereby emphasising it on the cost of others. Examples of adequate names are the Swedish *religionskunskap* or German *Religionskunde* (knowledge about religion). The English term "religious education" is slightly ambiguous, as it may be taken to imply a religious character of the subject. Similarly, the connotation of simply "religion" may be ambiguous in some contexts where "religion" used to be the name for confessional religious instruction. If integrative RE is regarded as part of a broader subject, this may be reflected in names like *Religion und Kultur* (in the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland) or *Lebensgestaltung-Ethik-Religionskunde* ("Shaping life, ethics, knowledge about religion" in the federal state of Brandenburg in Germany).

There are a number of other organisational issues in which didactics of the study of religion needs to find its own position(s). However, in the following, I would like to address what I think are key issues for any concept of integrative RE: the notion of religion, the representation of

religions and the notion of education.[22] As we have seen earlier, the notion of religion is contested in approaches to religious education. Didactics of the study of religions needs to position itself in this debate. In relation to debates about theory and methodology in the study of religions, we may ask where on the scale between classical phenomenological approaches to RE at one end and a complete deconstruction of "religion" at the other end didactics of the study of religions may find its place. Without any doubt, classical phenomenological approaches with their implicit or explicit universalist theological presuppositions, cannot serve as a framework for the study of religions in integrative RE, as this would mean an abuse of educational authority for a particular religious end, introducing pupils into an unquestioned religious paradigm, which contradicts the views of many religious and non-religious people.

If the well-known problems of the classical phenomenology of religion are addressed and avoided, a comparative study of religions in schools can, in fact, be a valuable contribution to the general educational task of the school. However, care needs to be taken in order not to introduce pupils to another unquestioned paradigm. Therefore, the debates about theory and methodology in the study of religions are very relevant for didactics. The general framework for integrative RE needs to be critical and broad enough in order to leave room for questioning one's own presuppositions about the notion of religion and the representation of religions. Without any doubt, teachers need to take a number of decisions concerning the epistemological framework in which they represent religions. However, communicating these processes and the implications of these decisions to the pupils are important tasks for the teachers if they do not want to abuse their educational authority. With respect to the notion of religion, in didactics we do not have to solve the general problems the academic study is confronted with, for example, the fact that there is no universally accepted concept of religion. However, the implications of recent research in the study of religions need to be considered in concepts for integrative RE. This means, for example, that postcolonial critique, feminist criticism, and the postmodern deconstruction of religion (see, for example, Joy 2001;

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[22] For a detailed outline of my position on these issues, see Alberts 2007:353–87.

Warne 2000; Geertz 2000b) need to be acknowledged. The latter, for example, does not mean that there is no place any more for the subject integrative RE, because its subject matter has been deconstructed. On the contrary, these processes and criticisms of traditional notions of religion which used to serve as frameworks for the representation of religions, need to be taken up in education about religions. After all, all these discourses which have been criticised and deconstructed, are still very influential in society and, therefore, still need to be studied. In the long run, this may very well result in a revision of curricula, particularly with respect to the selection of phenomena to be studied in RE. Here, a critical revision of the world-religions paradigm as framework for RE, for example, may help to broaden the scope of the subject and include phenomena such as non-institutionalised spirituality, civil religion, new, smaller or indigenous religions or other worldviews, which have often been excluded in frameworks based on world-religions typologies. Furthermore, postmodern criticism may serve as a critical corrective for the representation of religions in RE, addressing problems concerning the conscious or unconscious reproduction of grand narratives.

The issues concerning the search for a concept of religion which may serve as the basis for an adequate representation of religions in RE are closely related to the general question of what kind of concept of education didactics of the study of religions may be based upon. There is a great discrepancy between academic concepts of education, referring, for example, to individual self-determination of life and meaning, participation in decision-making about cultural, economic, social and political issues, and solidarity in order to grant self-determination and participation also to all other people (Klafki 2001), and concepts of education put forward by particular lobbies (be they driven by political, religious or economic interests), which reduce education to the acquisition of skills needed for their particular aims. The study of religions, as an academic discipline, needs to develop an approach to teaching about religions which builds on academic concepts of education. If education is not reduced to an acquisition of standardised knowledge, but is related to the development of consciousness and the ability to critically assess one's previous understanding, for example, of religion, in relation to new information, the importance of a generally open and critical framework for the representation of religions in RE becomes obvious.

The contested methodological issues need to be communicated to the pupils in RE so that they can take part in these debates. Therefore, integrative RE cannot be reduced to an acquisition of standardised knowledge about "world religions." An introduction to the debates about religion and religions in contemporary societies is much more important. This enables the pupils to make up their own minds about the grand narratives that are produced about religious "traditions." The critical and emancipatory impetus lying at the heart of critical educational theory (Adorno 1970; Heydorn 1995; Klafki 2001), which is based on critical social theory (e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno 1998), needs to be acknowledged as an integral part of the subject. Therefore, in order not to introduce the pupils to unquestioned paradigms, the crucial theoretical and methodological questions need to be addressed in RE.

Another contested issue where didactics of the study of religions needs to find its own position is the debate about the aims of integrative RE. Frequently, two aspects of aims of integrative RE are distinguished: *learning about religions* and *learning from religion*.[23] While *learning about religions* is uncontroversial from a study-of-religions point of view, *learning from religion* is a more delicate issue. What does it mean? It is related to the general educational task of the subject and of the school in general. In the national model syllabuses in England, for example, learning from religion is specified somewhat vaguely as "including the ability to: give an informed and considered response to religious and moral issues; reflect on what might be learnt from religions in the light of one's own beliefs and experience; identify and respond to questions of meaning within religions" (SCAA 1994:5). In the national syllabus for the Swedish *grundskola* (elementary school), the aim of RE is introduced as follows:

> The subject of Religion contributes to developing the ability to understand and reflect over oneself, one's life and surroundings and develop a preparedness for acting with responsibility. Working through existential and religious issues and considering existence from an ethical perspective, is part of a personal development process. Every individual reflects over such issues and needs to acquire

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[23] See, for example, the national model syllabuses or the non-statutory national framework for RE in England: SCAA 1994:5; QCA 2004:11. For the Swedish debate about aims of integrative RE see Härenstam 2000:145–164.

concepts from traditions, language and symbols to find meaning in those issues they face in life. (Skolverket 2000)

The formulation *learning from religion* emphasises the educational value of its counterpart *learning about religions*. In an integrative RE context, however, it may be asked whether or not the concept learning from religion privileges religious worldviews over secular ones, presupposing an inherent value of religious traditions which secular worldviews lack, for example with respect to moral questions. Moreover, one may doubt that learning from religion has its place in a generally secular framework, as it may imply a religious character of the learning process, asking the pupils to accept religious frameworks when they articulate their own positions. The problems is that the formulation *learning from religions* is so vague that it may be interpreted as secular as well as religious. For example, Robert Jackson's idea of *edification*, a different view on the familiar after having been challenged by the unfamiliar, which identifies reflexivity as an integral part of interpretive processes in RE, can be regarded as a secular interpretation of learning from religion, acknowledging that studying other ways of life and reflecting about what has been studied cannot been separated from each other (Jackson 1997:130–134). Some formulations in the English national model syllabuses, however, imply a religious character of learning from religions, for example, when "synthesis," including "linking significant features of religion together in a coherent pattern; connecting different aspects of life into a meaningful whole," is regarded as a central skill of RE (SCAA 1994:5).

Considering this ambiguity of the formulation *learning from religion*, for didactics of the study of religions I would like to suggest to replace it with the formulation *learning from **the study** of religions*, in order to exclude a religious interpretation of this aim of integrative RE, but to emphasise, at the same time, the general analytical skills which the study of religions fosters and to refer to the reflexive aspect of the subject. The latter may be necessary in order to defend the subject against the popular argument that a study of different religions within a secular framework was unrelated to the lives and own experiences of the pupils.[24] *Learning from the study of religions* does not imply that

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[24] This is, for example, presupposed in Hammond, Hay et al. 1990, e.g. 21. For an analysis of this argument in the German context, see e.g. Lott 1998.

religions are institutions of moral superiority, but leaves room for an acknowledgement of the ambivalence of "religion." Furthermore, it expresses more clearly the emancipatory approach to education, which involves a critical study of various phenomena and discourses, challenging previously unquestioned presuppositions.

(b) *Didactics of the Study of Religions within the Constraints of External Factors*

There are a number of external factors and constraints which influence the contexts in which didactics of the study of religion can actually be applied. Generally, like other educational issues, the character of integrative RE is negotiated between different stakeholders, resulting in different frameworks for learning about religion/s. These frameworks may contradict the principles of the study of religions, for example, with respect to the impartial treatment of different religions.

First, also apart from regulations concerning integrative RE, frameworks for school education in general may not really be secular. In England, for example, "spiritual development" is regarded as a task of school education in general (UK Parliament 1988). In other countries, particular religious traditions are named in school laws or other regulations as frameworks for education. This may be more implicit like in the Swedish national curriculum which mentions "ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism" as a reference for the values that the school should represent and impart (Skolverket 2006:3). In other countries, school laws interpret education in general as education within a particular religious tradition. In Norway, for example, the education act states:

> The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society. (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2007a:§1–2)

Similarly, the school laws of several German federal states interpret school education in general as Christian education. Furthermore, on these grounds, Christian symbols and clothes are privileged while other religious items, most explicitly the Muslim headscarf, are banned from

classrooms (for example, Land Baden-Württemberg 2006 §38.2; Freistaat Bayern 2007: art. 59.2). Considering these school laws and regulations, the challenge for didactics of the study of religions and integrative RE is to establish a framework which is impartial with respect to religions in a context which is not impartial.

Second, teaching and learning about different religions may be organised within frameworks in which the study of religions appears merely as an aspect of other school subjects, for example in France or in many schools in the Netherlands. In these models it may be difficult to communicate basic distinctions in the study of religions (for example, between religious and non-religious views of "religion") to teachers and pupils who will teach and learn about religions merely as a part of, for example, history or geography. How can didactics of the study of religions be integrated in these approaches? A minimum requirement would be the inclusion of modules in the study of religions in the teacher training programmes for teachers of those subjects which comprise some study of religions. It may be doubted, however, that it is possible to communicate the complex theoretical and methodological issues as well as sufficient knowledge about religions in a by-programme and not an individual subject, at university as well as school levels.

Third, if there is integrative RE as an individual school subject, the regulations for this subject may privilege particular traditions, or draw a map of integrative RE which is quite different from what would be favourable from a study-of-religions point of view. For example, the English Education Reform Act states with respect to religious education that any newly agreed syllabus

> shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (UK Parliament 1988, section 8.3)

Similarly, the syllabus for the obligatory subject *Kristendoms-, religions- og livssynskunnskap* (KRL) in Norway prescribes that 55% of teaching time should be dedicated to Christianity, 25% to Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam together, and the remaining 20% to philosophy and ethics (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2005:11). The privileged position of Christianity in the name *Kristendoms-, religions- og livssynskunnskap*

(KRL) is indicative of the generally privileged position of Christianity in this school subject.[25]

This is also the case in the subject *Unterricht in biblischer Geschichte auf allgemeinchristlicher Grundlage* (BGU, education in biblical history on a generally Christian basis), a non-confessional school subject taught in Bremen in Germany. This name goes back to a compromise in the year 1947, when the city of Bremen decided not to include confessional instruction in the normal school curriculum. The Department for the Study of Religions and Religious Education of the University of Bremen, which educates prospective teachers for BGU, interprets BGU as a study of different religions from a non-confessional point of view. Therefore, students with various religious or non-religious backgrounds may study at this department in order to become BGU teachers later.[26] However, the Christian churches, which are consulted by the secular authority of education for the creation of syllabuses for BGU and help to organise the post-graduate school practice phases, interpret BGU as inter-confessional Christian education (e.g. Bremische Evangelische Kirche 2007). Therefore, there is disagreement about the question if, for example, Jewish or Muslim graduates from the teacher training programme may actually teach BGU, since the Christian churches regard being Christian as a prerequisite for that. The outcome of these debates between the university, the city of Bremen and the religious communities is still open and it may be possible that the courts will have to decide about the general character of BGU.

For didactics of the study of religions, these debates raise the question where there is a limit to accommodating imperfect conditions and legal frameworks of integrative RE. Certainly, if we want to get involved in teaching about religions in schools, some kind of compromise will be

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[25] Its bias in favour of Christianity was found incompatible with its compulsory status by the European Court of Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights 2007). In response to this decision, the Norwegian government has recently announced its intention to adapt the subject so that its compulsory status does not contradict human rights conventions of religious freedom any more (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2007b).
[26] Cf. the Bachelor course, which forms the first part of the teacher training programme, Freie Hansestadt Bremen 2006.

unavoidable. If we supported integrative RE only in ideal surroundings, it would hardly be possible for us to support any model at all and, perhaps, prove that a study-of-religions approach is helpful in school contexts. If the study of religions does not claim its responsibility for integrative RE at all, other interest groups will be ready to take its place. Furthermore, in order to change the educational contexts towards more favourable conditions for teaching and learning about religions in schools, the study of religions needs to engage in these debates and make available its expertise in this field. However, I think we need a discussion about the limits beyond which we cannot support a model any more, because its bias fundamentally contradicts the principles of didactics of the study of religions. Clearly, the study of religions cannot support confessional models of teaching about religion, even though knowledge provided by the study of religions may be used in confessional RE. Therefore, with respect to integrative RE, an important question is whether the general framework excludes people on religious grounds. This is the case, for example, in the Hamburg model of integrative RE ("Religionsunterricht für Alle," see Weiße 1996), which is designed for pupils of various religious and non-religious backgrounds, but may be taught independently only by teachers who belong to a Christian church (Link 2002:222). The same issue may become crucial in Bremen, should courts decide that teachers for BGU need to be Christians. This would probably result in a termination of the participation of the Department for the Study of Religions and Religious Education of the University of Bremen in teacher training for BGU, as this would fundamentally contradict the department's approach to integrative RE and its interpretation of the school subject BGU.

Regarding cooperation under imperfect conditions, the question if the general framework allows for a non-religious impartial approach at all is decisive. In many national or regional contexts, there may be a variety of interpretations of integrative RE. If the general framework allows for it, didactics of the study of religions can contribute a secular approach which acknowledges the diversity of religious and non-religious backgrounds of the pupils and respects the rights to freedom of and from religion.

Didactics of the Study of Religions Beyond School Contexts

The focus of didactics of the study of religions is not limited to school contexts. There are other fields where it is needed. In fact, it relates to any

field where teaching and learning about religion takes place in secular environments. In higher education, it relates, for example, to programmes for the study of religion at universities. Furthermore, it is relevant for modules in the study of religion which are part of other programmes, for example, teacher training for history in countries where integrative religious education is included in the school subject history. In Europe, the restructuring of the university systems (e.g. the "Bologna process") can be regarded as a particular challenge for didactics of the study of religions at this level. How are academic courses in the study of religions adapted to this changed environment? By what kind of programmes are our traditional courses replaced? On which notion of university education are these programmes based? This is another area where the comparative study and development of concepts for teaching and learning about religion falls within the realm of didactics of the study of religions. Furthermore, other institutions which are often regarded as cultural or political rather than educational, also serve the task of communicating knowledge about religions in secular environments. This is the case in museums which deal with religion, for example, the *Religionskundliche Sammlung* in Marburg in Germany. In this museum, knowledge about religions is communicated to the public with objects from different regions of the world. Furthermore, it is visited regularly by groups of teachers and pupils (Bräunlein 2004). In addition to this obvious field for didactics of the study of religions, it is also needed in museums which deal with religion or religions only among a number of other topics, but are not mainly museums of religions. Furthermore, monuments which communicate information about or interpretations of religions and religious diversity can be regarded as another field, just as other media which serve this function. In this respect, didactics of the study of religions can be regarded as one aspect of an applied study of religions, relating to the "expanding classroom" (see the article by David Chidester in this issue).

3. Engagement in Practical Issues Related to Education about Religion

Didactics of the study of religions is not limited to the study of models of education about religion and the development of concepts for this purpose at an academic level. Its field requires practical engagement in

various contexts relating to teaching and learning about religion/s in secular environments. In the following, I will briefly describe five areas which I think need to be particular foci of this engagement: teacher training, the development of teaching material, cooperation with various agents representing religion in society, cooperation with educational authorities, and participation in public and political debates about religion, education, and RE.

There are a number of tasks for teacher training in the study of religions. First, the study of religions needs to claim its place in teacher training for integrative RE as well as for the secular alternative subjects to confessional RE in separative contexts. Frequently, for these subjects, theologies rather than the study of religions are regarded as partners for teacher training, since they have much more experience with school didactics. These are fields where the study of religions still needs to communicate the relevance of its approach. In some contexts, however, for example for the subject *religion* in the Danish upper secondary school, this has been done quite successfully already (Jensen 2007). It is important that the study of religions develops teacher training programmes for integrative RE and "alternative" subjects to confessional RE from a clear study-of-religions point of view. Currently, these teacher training programmes are often not really based on didactics of the study of religions, but rather compromises with various interest groups. In face of the unsatisfactory situation of teaching and learning about different religions in many countries, the young field of didactics of the study of religions will profit immensely from international cooperation. A transfer of knowledge is necessary in order not to repeat the same debates again and again in each country and to counter the religiously motivated propaganda against integrative RE.[27] In addition to teacher training programmes at universities, the study of religions needs to get involved in institutions which are responsible for more school-related training courses. So far, the responsibility of the study of religions often terminates once students get their university degrees and well-established religious communities take over. This is, for example, the case in Bremen where the study of religions is not involved in the second phase of teacher training for integrative RE. Supervision and

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[27] An overview of the latter in Germany can be found in Lott 1998:9–17.

support from the study of religions is needed also in postgraduate school practice phases. Furthermore, taking into account the large number of teachers of integrative RE who have no background in the study of religions, education courses for teachers are also needed in order to communicate the character of the subject and recent research insights to them and discuss together its applicability in schools. Concepts for teacher education and in-service training need to acknowledge the variety of school contexts, including preschool, primary school, secondary school, vocational school, evening school, and special schools.

The lack of adequate teaching material for integrative RE has often been noted (for example, Härenstam 1993;[28] Westerman 1996; van der Velde 2007). However, there are impressive exceptions. For example, the textbooks produced by the Warwick team, based on the interpretive approach (e.g. Wayne, Everington et al. 1996), or the series *Danske Verdensreligioner* (Danish World Religions, cf. Jensen 2007:341–42), transfer expertise in the study of religions and its didactics to teaching material. Generally, the study of religions needs to contribute to the textbook market and train students to be able to write textbooks. For this task, students require knowledge in the study of religions and in didactics of the study of religions. However, teaching material is by no means restricted to textbooks, but includes a number of other media, not least films and virtual resources.

Another task for didactics of the study of religions is cooperation with various agents representing "religion" in societies. These include religious communities, but are not restricted to these. Among religious communities it may be important to establish trust for integrative RE based on the study of religions, for example regarding the communication of its methodological presuppositions, which are neither religious nor anti-religious. Furthermore, cooperation with religious communities is a basis for visits, which may be included in teacher training as well as integrative RE itself in order to enable encounters and direct contact with insiders of different traditions. However, for didactics of the study of religions it is crucial that it treats the different religious groups equally. This means, for example, that it cannot support the

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[28] This study is part of the European research project on Islam in textbooks, cf. Falaturi 1990.

privileges that well-established religions often have, particularly in RE contexts. Apart from religious communities, there are also other institutions, groups and individuals who represent religion. An open approach to religion requires openness for various areas where religion is represented in society in order not to limit "religion" to a selection of "world religions" or locally influential religious communities. We need to embark upon new fields where what we call "religion" matters in societies, for example, with respect to worldviews of people today and the beliefs and values which determine or guide their actions.

A fourth practical task for didactics of the study of religions is cooperation with educational authorities. The character of the rather young subject integrative RE needs to be explained to heads of schools, local and national education authorities, ministries of education etc. The study of religions needs to supply the kind of knowledge which is important for decisions in educational institutions. Just as the character of the academic study of religions is often misunderstood, so is the character of integrative RE. Scholars in the study of religions need to participate in consultation processes leading to the creation of laws, guidelines, syllabuses etc. on local, national and international levels. This has been done by most of the authors in this volume. Their work is, however, an exception rather than the rule in the academic study of religions.

My final point in this section is about the recognition of the social and political responsibility of the study of religions and its didactics to make the knowledge it produces available to society. Scholars of religion need to participate in political and public debates about religion, education and RE. Otherwise we support the notion that, above all, representatives of religious communities are to be regarded as specialists not only for their own religion (which is arguable in itself, considering the reproduction of religious authority this implies), but also for "religion" in general.

Conclusion

As shown above, teaching and learning about religion take place in a number of contexts, inside and outside educational institutions. The academic discipline of the study of religions cannot wait until ideal

fields of application in terms of surroundings for education about religion and religions exist in schools or elsewhere, before it develops a didactic branch. This would mean leaving education about religion/s beyond academia to people with other, possibly religious or anti-religious agendas, who do not have an academic background in the comparative study of religions.

In fact, even the university contexts in which our subject is based do very often not correspond to our self-understanding.[29] Likewise, the study of religions cannot refrain from getting involved in the educational debates around teaching and learning about religions, trying to leave everything which has to do with education to educationalists and interpreting its own contribution merely as the provision of knowledge about details in the history of religions. Educationalists without any background in the study of religions are unlikely to understand the important distinctions which the study of religions has introduced. Therefore, rather than trying to assign the professional responsibility for education about religion/s to other stakeholders, the study of religions needs to develop its own didactics. We need scholars in the study of religions who, at the same time, have expertise in the fields of education and didactics and combine this expertise for didactics of the study of religions.

This does certainly not reflect the study of religions in its narrowest interpretation, regarding the production of knowledge solely as an end in itself and trying to be immune against any other normative interpretation. Delimitations from normative (e.g., religious or colonial) positions are important, but this does not mean that the study of religions has nothing to do with school contexts, which are, of course, normative, as they intend to educate the young generation into specific societies. Just as the university system, which incorporates the academic discipline of the study of religions, serves particular interests, the interests behind school education do not make an integration of the kind of knowledge that the study of religions produces into schools impossible. However, this knowledge is not just readily available detailed information about a selection of religions in which educators may be interested.

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[29] For example, when the integration of Departments for the Study of Religions in Faculties of Theology seems to imply that the general religious framework of the Faculty applies to the Study of Religions, too.

On the contrary, it cannot be separated from theoretical and methodological considerations about religion and religions. This applies to university as well as other educational contexts. Therefore, just as we do not leave the design of university programmes in the study of religions to external educationalists and just contribute information about religions, we need to get actively involved in the analysis and design of concepts for school education about religion/s, which includes participating in a number of practical issues, despite all delicate issues involved in the field of religion and education.

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Obituary

Gary Lease
(1940–2008)

Gary Lease, Treasurer of the International Association for the History of Religions (1997–2008), died January 4 in Santa Cruz, California. Gary had long been an active participant in the IAHR, attending his first quinquennial Congress in Sydney, Australia in 1985. In his role as the Executive Secretary of the North American Association for the Study of Religion, he also served on the IAHR's International Committee from 1995 to 2004. Although a member of several national and international associations and societies, including the American Society for the Study of Religion which for some time represented American scholars to the IAHR, Gary's primary professional commitments belonged essentially to the IAHR because of its mission of establishing and supporting the scientific study of religion in our academic institutions. He was intimately involved in current preparations for the twentieth World Congress to be held in Toronto 2010, both in successfully helping to raise funds for this event and as a member of the Program Committee for the Congress.

Throughout his academic life — professionally, administratively, and scholarly — Gary indefatigably championed the scholarly principles of *Religionswissenschaft* and sharply contested views that compromised the scientific integrity of the field. Those who knew Gary from his participation in numerous international conferences will well remember his robust style of presentation, influenced, perhaps, by the cinematic exploits of his father, Rex Lease, an early twentieth-century actor known for his dramatic cowboy cliffhangers. Forthright and direct in academic debate, Gary was, nevertheless, flexible, diplomatic, and practical in his service to the IAHR and NAASR and in the administrative responsibilities he undertook for his University.

Gary was Professor of the History of Consciousness and former Chair of that interdisciplinary graduate program at the University of California, Santa Cruz where he taught since 1973. During that period, he was deeply involved in campus life, serving, variously, as Chair of Environmental Studies, Dean of the Humanities Division (and again as Interim Dean), Associate Chancellor, Director of the University of California's Education Abroad Program in Göttingen, Acting Provost of Kresge College, and, most recently, as chair of the university's Language Studies Program.

Despite his deep involvement in the practical affairs of his professional affiliations and in that of his university, Gary was continuously engaged in full-time teaching and scholarship. He undertook original research in several fields from hands-on archaeological digs to forays into international libraries and archives. Much of his work in these areas made a significant contribution to the fields of archaeology, Graeco-Roman religions, Christian origins, history of religions, and modern German political history, among others. In addition to articles in these fields, he is the author of *Witness to the Faith: Cardinal Newman on the Teaching Authority of the Church* (1971), *"Odd Fellows" in the Politics of Religion* (1995) and co-editor of *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (1995). At the time of his death, Gary was working on a book with the title of *The Wars About Religion: A Report from the Front*, which promised to be a thorough analysis and critique of the quest for and debates over origins in the study of religion.

Many will not know that Gary was also a world-class hunter and marksman and hunted big game around the world. This was an intellectual as well as a physical pursuit, and often involved discussion and debate about what Paul Shepard, one of Gary's favorite authors, called *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*. And his activities here, as friends have noted, could wind up in conference presentations or papers on human/animal relations or in pithy and pointed commentaries on his hunts that accompanied emails forwarding news in which power and religion intersected.

In an email sent to friends shortly before his death, Gary reflected upon his scholarship, upon his life and upon life in general. He concluded that he had attempted to live his own life to its fullest — as

indeed he did — and that his only regret was the effect his death would have for his wife Dorothea, the "love of his life," his constant companion and conversation partner. Our regret is to have lost a true friend and committed colleague.

Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe

Book Reviews

Eine Schweiz — viele Religionen — Risiken und Chancen des Zusammenlebens.
By Martin Baumann and Jörg Stolz Bielefeld: transcript — Kultur und
soziale Praxis 2007. ISBN 978-3-89942-524-6

The book reviewed below is the result of an interdisciplinary cooperation of 22
scholars of religions dealing with the historical foundations and the recent
developments of present-day religious plurality in Switzerland. Its editors —
Martin Baumann (Religious Studies) and Jörg Stolz (Sociology of Religion) —
compiled a body of 21 essays in order to produce an „anschaulichen,
wissenschaftlich gestützten und zugleich allgemein verständlichen Text zur
religiösen Vielfalt und ihren Folgen in den verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen
Bereichen in der Schweiz". (14) In doing so, they approached the difficult task
of editing an academic textbook and a professional reference book at the same
time. This aim translates into the structure of the edition that brings together
(a) terminological reflections, (b) case studies on particular Christian and
non-Christian traditions and (c) considerations on the relations of these tradi-
tions to the wider society. Following this agenda, the text is ordered around
four complementary sections.

The first section starts with poignant reflections on the general subject mat-
ter of the book and the terms 'religion' and 'plurality' in particular. Baumann
and Stolz introduce an analytical frame of reference that combines three main
theses: First, they highlight the long duration and fluctuating traditions of
religious plurality in Switzerland. Second, they claim that throughout the last
30 years a substantial increase of religious plurality has occurred — in terms
of the numerical presence of religious groups as well as the variety of their
social forms. Third, they make the point that this process has to be analysed in
the context of modernization-, differentiation- and secularization-theories. In
this way, the editors elucidate their general approach (without going too much
into the academic debates around the respective concepts) and set the tone for
the following essays.

From this starting-point, the second part of the book brings together a
group of historians of religions that present case-studies on the developments
of the Christian traditions in Switzerland. Bertrand Forclaz opens this section

with a review of inner-Christian processes of differentiation after the Reformation. The remaining essays focus on the Roman Catholic Church (Krüggeler/Weibel), the Reformed Churches (Bernhardt) as well as on more marginalized Christian traditions — such as Evangelicals (Favre/Stolz), Christian-Orthodox groups (Baumer) and what they call Christian '*Sondergruppen*' (Weibel). All these contributions follow one joint pattern: They start with a section on historical developments, go on with up-to-date statistical data and complete their contribution by identifying major present-day trends. Taken together the essays convey a vivid impression of the multi-confessional history of Switzerland and its cantons.

The next set of case-studies of *Eine Schweiz – viele Religionen* completes this picture with reference to the Jews (Picard), Muslims (Behloul/Lathion), Buddhists (Sindemann) and Hindus (Baumann) and closes with Stefan Rademacher's essays on the so called New Religious Movements and the Esoteric-Scene. Even though the presence of these religious communities is of more recent origin (with the exception of the Jewish groups) and smaller numbers, the authors argue, that they add a distinctive aspect to the present-day religious scene in Switzerland. Moreover, they assert that all these religious traditions look back on a development that is manifold and diverse in itself.

The final part of the edition is based upon the case-studies of the second and the third section and focuses on the social consequences of religious plurality (rather than the process of pluralization itself). The first five essays of this section deal with the interrelations between religious plurality and public schooling (Frank/Jödicke), the media (Imhof/Ettinger), the legal system (Famos), politics (Voll) and the medical system (Rossi). In doing so, they allude to present-day potentials for conflict as well as long-established strategies of conflict-resolution. The section closes with another article of the editors that adds a more political flavour to the whole edition. Baumann and Stolz highlight the ambivalent role of religious plurality in regard to social conflicts, the idea of religious freedom and the European history of religions.

To put it in a nutshell, all 21 essays of this edition are more or less descriptive in character. On about 15 pages, each author offers an up-to-date and well-balanced impression of one particular aspect of the present-day religious scene in Switzerland. The essays present interesting details on the religious traditions as well as fruitful systematic cross-references to further social phenomena. However, the virtual strength of *Eine Schweiz – viele Religionen* lies in the combination of the essays. In total, they draw a detailed picture of the religious situation in Switzerland that gives justice to the manifold processes of pluralization. In this sense the book goes beyond a mere dictionary of varied religious traditions or an ecclesiastical history of Switzerland and gives a good

example for a professional Religious Studies-approach to the modern history of religions.

For a final estimation it makes sense to return to the general aims of the editors. Baumann and Stolz did not intend to publish a historical or sociological study on the structures of religious plurality in Switzerland. They rather wanted to present clear-cut academic concepts as well as a profound academic agenda to students (academic textbook) and to provide concise, up-to-date information and further references to professionals (reference book). For both audiences the book makes a worthwhile reading, due to the high quality of the expert writers and the equilibrium between case studies and systematic analyses. From this point of view, it would be most desirable to see this book undergo a process of ongoing updating and to replicate its concept in other countries.

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Indian Religions: Renaissance and Renewal. Edited by ANNA S. KING. London: Equinox, 2006, xix and 412 pp. Cost (in the United States): $90. ISBN 978-1-84553-169-0.

The eighteen articles in this volume grew from papers delivered at the 2006 Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions. The Symposium featured both newer and more advanced scholars who presented papers on a variety of topics and traditions of India (but especially Hinduism and Buddhism). The volume is only lightly edited, and retains the inconsistencies of citation style, transliteration (e.g., Śaṃkara, Śankara, Śaṅkara, and Shankara all appear), and terminology (e.g., "Hinayana" versus "Theravada") one would expect in a collection of conference papers. Moreover, the Spalding Symposia are not generally oriented around a specific theme, and though there is some implicit conversation between and among the various articles in this volume, as a whole it lacks the cohesion of collections with more focused themes, having instead, as King puts it in her introduction, "the character of a scholarly journal" (xii). Therefore, while the volume's value is occasionally greater than the sum of its parts, it is not significantly so. That is not to say, however, that there are not some rather impressive and provocative parts.

Indian Religions is divided into four sections. Klaus Klostermaier opens the first section, "Challenging Paradigms" with an article entitled "Hinduism — Hindutva — Hindu Dharma." In this article, which King's introduction suggests "undoubtedly evoked the most passionate, and even hostile, responses" (xii), Klostermaier argues that the true Hindu Renaissance (usually associated with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) is happening *right now* through the work of the Sangh Parivar and other exponents of Hindutva ideologies. Klostermaier compares the Hindutva movement so reviled by many western and Indian scholars to religious reform movements touched off by Shankara, Ramanuja, and Caitanya. These movements have in common, he claims, the fact that they "take elements of Hindu tradition and reshape them in the light of their own time so as to provide answers to the needs of their contemporaries" (10). Klostermaier takes religion scholars to task for their tendency to present Hindutva as an aberration of "true" Hinduism. Hindutva ideas and ideals should of course be compared to those of other forms of Hinduism, but to dismiss Hindutva as deviant rather than attempting to put it in its proper historical and sociological context (which Klostermaier believes is still significantly influenced by the memory of Muslim and Christian colonialism) is, he thinks, to arbitrarily essentialize Hinduism.

In the section's second article, Hans Bakker differentiates the principle of *ahiṃsā* ("not killing") from Hindu theories about warfare, which he says "was

endemic in South Asia and seen as the right and duty of the Hindu king" (28). Bakker describes the various ways that warfare has been conceived and regulated in Hindu history and suggests that the Hindu encounter with Islamic invaders after the eleventh century altered Hindu views on the topic in ways that are still relevant to the interpretation of Indian communal unrest today.

Knut Jacobsen and Ninian Smart (posthumously) argue, in their contribution to this section, "Is Hinduism an Offshoot of Buddhism?" that the immensity of the Buddhist effect on Hinduism has been underestimated, so much so that — as the title implies — the usual presentation of Buddhism as an offshoot of Hinduism should perhaps be reversed. Among the central ideas and practices of contemporary Hinduism which may derive, the authors argue, from Buddhism (appearing as they do in Buddhism at least as early as in the Hindu tradition), are rebirth, *mokṣa*, meditation, renunciation, *ahiṃsā*, vegetarianism, cosmic cycles, the soteriological centrality of religious teachers (gurus), etc. Despite its necessarily (yet sometimes frustratingly) tentative nature, the article is in many ways persuasive.

The last article in Section One, "The Philosophy of Religion from the Perspective of Indian Religions," is authored by Karel Werner, founder of the Spalding Symposium. In it, he criticizes philosophers of religion for being overly influenced by western theism. After reviewing and critiquing the work of some prominent (and some not so prominent) western philosophers of religion (Hick, Proudfoot, Linhart, etc.) and noting, with surprise and disappointment, that even Arvind Sharma's work on Hindu and Buddhist philosophies of religion falls prey to the theistic bias, Werner argues that an encounter with the Indian tradition will aid and correct contemporary philosophers of religion in what he considers their four central tasks: 1) "…the conceptual analysis of human thought and the ways in which it is expressed" which includes "descriptions of human experiences, in so far as they have religious contents" (60), 2) the "interpretation or elucidation of religious teachings in terms compatible with philosophical means of expression" (60), 3) a consideration of the justifiability of religious teachings "as ontologically conceivable in the realm of the possible" (60), and 4) participation in "philosophical thinking about religion" (61).

The articles in Section Two, "Text and Context" all focus on Indian textual traditions (or those who interpreted them). Dermot Killingley's article provides a close textual analysis and comparison of various Vedic (esp. Upanishadic) and Samkhya formulations of the body and its functions, which appear frequently in scriptures as lists of five, or "pentads," like the common Vedic formulation: speech, breath, sight, hearing, and mind (73). Killingley emphasizes the microcosmic/macrocosmic homologies prevalent in these conceptions and the continuity of Samkhya formulations with those that appear in the Vedas (despite the obvious differences between the two).

David Bastow's "Time and the Sarvāstivadins" analyzes this early Buddhist community's argument for the existence of past and future *dharmas* — "short-lived psycho-physical experience-events" (113) — which was based on the following three propositions: 1) That one can, in a meditative state, examine, or "see" one's own state of mind, past states of mind, and the future consequences of present actions and/or states of mind, 2) That a state of mind which can be seen cannot be simultaneous with the seeing, and 3) That "whatever can be seen must exist" (112). Bastow provisionally accepts the first two propositions, but insists that we can only accept the third if we assume that "what is now open to [our] direct mental inspection is the very object itself [Direct Realism], not some representation of it [Representative Realism]" (121). This, however is an assumption he acknowledges is at the moment very much up for debate in philosophical circles.

An article in this section by Jacqueline Suthren Hirst describes Shankara's strategies of "negation, complementarity and mutual purification of terms" (124), with which he analyzed scriptural language employed to describe the self (*ātman*) and *Brahman.* Shankara (c. eighth century CE), considered by many the preeminent exponent of *advaita vedānta*, insisted that the various words used to describe such things should limit, correct, and qualify each other, and Suthren Hirst argues cogently that the diverse portraits of Shankara which have come down to us through history (Shankara as ascetic mystic, as exegete, as philosopher, as social reformer, etc.) should be used in the same way. In the end, however, she contends that Shankara is most appropriately understood as a theologian with "soteriological concerns" (127) and a pronounced reliance upon scripture.

Kathleen Taylor's delightfully sleuthing contribution to Section Two examines the influential and (at the time) controversially sympathetic series of works on the Tantras published between 1913 and 1922 by Sir John Woodroffe, the Calcutta High Court judge and connoisseur of Indian art, under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon (a not-so-well-kept secret). Taylor suggests that Woodroffe used the pseudonym not to protect himself so much as to obscure the fact that he had collaborated with his far more knowledgeable Indian friend, Atal Bihari Ghose. Taylor hypothesizes that Ghose believed (probably rightly), that having sympathetic treatments of the Tantras associated with the name of a respected British Orientalist would have a more positive effect on public sentiment (British *and* Indian) than if they were attributed to an Indian Hindu, and therefore chose to remain anonymous.

David Gellner's essay on Theravada revivalism in Nepal is the most lucid and theoretical of the contributions to Section Three, which is organized around the theme, "Encounter, Revival, and Reform." The monks and nuns who introduced Theravada Buddhism among Mahayana-oriented Newar

Buddhists in the first half of the twentieth century, Gellner argues, understood themselves to be restoring "authentic" monastic practice. Yet at the same time, they were clearly also a modernizing force. For this reason, while Gellner generally rejects the Theravada = Protestant, Mahayana = Catholic analogy when it is applied to Buddhism as a whole (and gives good reasons for doing so), he allows that it might have some utility in the case of the Nepalese Theravada revival.

Matthew Clark's tentative but well-documented history of the Dasanami ("Ten Names") renunciate lineages not only reads past the hagiographical *Mathamnayas* literature to trace the development, institutionalization, and standardization of this famous tradition, but also shows how, between the eighth and fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, Shankara is snatched by the normative literature from relative historical obscurity and enshrined as the putative founder of the tradition (while being simultaneously transformed from vaishnavite thinker to shaivite sage).

The article which follows, by Ron Geaves, critiques the common claim that Guru Maharaji (of the Divine Light Mission and international late twentieth-century fame) belongs to the Sant Mat (or Radhasoami) tradition. Based on persuasive historical and ethnographic work, Geaves traces Maharaji's spiritual lineage back through the Advait Mat of Shri Totapuri ji Maharaj (Ramakrishna Paramhans's teacher) to the Dasanami tradition, and uses this particular context to discuss, in a more general way, the formation of *paramparās, panths*, and the process of institutionalization itself.

Section Three also includes a thoughtful and erudite essay by Geoffrey Samuel on the eighth to twelfth-century Buddhist adoption of "extreme" Shaiva (Kaula) beliefs and practices, which Samuel attempts to account for and interpret with reference to its proper socio-cultural context, and another by Theodore Gabriel, which describes the Brahmanization of the Muttappan Cult in North Malabar (Kerala), and thereby puts flesh on the bones of M.N. Srinivas's well-known (and oft-cited) theory of Sanskritization.

Section Four, "Renewing the World: Sacred Performance, Sacred Art," begins with a meandering article by David Smith on the "classical Hindu imagination" (291) which derives, he writes, from Hinduism's "most aesthetically satisfying texts and images" (ibid.). These texts and images are to be found, he asserts (somewhat arbitrarily it seems to me) in "the classical Sanskrit tradition, itself formed by reading and rewriting the Vedas and the Epics — having as its core such texts as the *Devīmāhātmya*, the *Saundaryalaharī*, and the *Yogavāsiṣṭarāmāyaṇa* and such images as Durgā killing Mahiṣa, and Śiva Naṭarāja" (292). He then proceeds from these claims, very much against the spirit of Klostermaier's opening article, to critique Vinayak Savarkar's Hin-

dutva "imagination" which, he contends, took on "monstrous form" (294) and was rooted in "mass hysteria" (295). Following this, Smith begins to rail against Hindu critics of Paul Courtright's work on Ganesha, who he believes represent a "scary Talibanization" (298) of Hinduism. "There are true imaginings [of Hinduism] and there are false imaginings" (296), Smith maintains, but one wonders with what authority, and on what grounds, does he (or any other scholar) get to decide which is which.

The volume's editor, Anna King, contributes an excellent article to Section Four on the Kumbha Mela and its presentation in the media. King cautions against assuming that all (or even all western) media representations of the Kumbha Mela are orientalist, and not only carefully shows how significantly media coverage of the *melā* varies, but also describes the complicated and mutually instrumental relationship that Kumbha Mela organizers and participants have with representatives of the media.

The article following King's, by Alleyn Diesel draws upon fieldwork among ethnically Tamil Hindus in KwaZulu-Natal to suggest that powerful Hindu goddesses could (and should) be used "to provide women, even those outside the Tamil tradition, with empowering role models, encouraging them to challenge patriarchal injustices and gender abuse" (342). Unfortunately, the article fails to make use of much subtler and more nuanced academic treatments of the topic (such as those, for example, in Kathleen Erndl and Alf Hiltebeitel's edited volume, *Is the Goddess a Feminist?*) and, in my view, oversteps its evidence.

Articles by Richard Shaw, on an impressive, sculpture-covered wall at the Mallikarjuna temple in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh (with pictures and detailed documentation), and another by Christopher Aslet on various techniques used in Hindu and Buddhist art to evoke transcendent reality, round out Section Four.

As a whole, the volume assumes basic (but wide-ranging) knowledge of Indian religious history and a rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit, and would not be accessible to undergraduates. That said, some of the individual articles (David Gellner's is the best example) are written in a more accessible style. Though the contributions to the volume are, as I have suggested, of uneven quality, there are some truly excellent and provocative essays which would be of interest to a wide range of scholars and — in some cases — worth using in undergraduate or graduate classes. The volume's utility, therefore, is rather like the scholarly journals to which King likens it in her introduction.

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Possession, Power and the New Age. Ambiguities of Authority in Neoliberal Societies. By Matthew Wood. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007 (Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series), 203 pp., ISBN-13: 978-0-7546-3339-6.

This book contains many observations, reflections and suggestions that are valuable for the study of so-called New Age religion. Matthew Wood offers a necessary departure from the scholarly works that emphasize self-authority as the central component of New Age religion. In his own words, this book "is a refutation of the scholarly discourse about the New Age and self-authority, but also a consideration of how social phenomena classified under this label should be understood." He challenges "the orthodox understanding of a range of contemporary Euro-American religious phenomena," mainly for their lack of social contextualization. By bringing in Bourdieu and Foucault, and focusing on power and authorization, Wood wants to offer a sociological perspective by which New Age religion can be contextualized.

His distinction between 'formative' and 'nonformative' religious contexts is especially useful. The latter is "characterized by multiple authorities, none of which are formative in shaping them [the individuals and groups], but all of which contribute in so doing." With these concepts, Wood puts the 'ambiguities of authority' on view that characterize many forms of New Age religiosity. For example, some channellers have a high degree of authority during their workshops, but their workshops do not necessarily have a significant influence in the lives of participants. In fact, Wood rightly suggests that scholars should pay more attention to the ways New Age practices fit into the lives of those who participate.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to follow his line of reasoning and to keep in touch with the main thread of the book. To start with, the title of the book is confusing. The theme of possession is not as important in the book as the title suggests. Why else would the five pages on the 'centrality of possession' start at page 115? Yet, the foremost stumbling blocks are the structure and the style of the book. The chapters devoted to 'the field of sociological studies concerning the New Age' take many densely written pages that seem to meander through an overload of critical reflections on numerous other New Age studies. They are puzzling, also because the significance of many of his suggestions for his own ethnography remains unclear. For example, while he emphasizes the importance of Foucault, he treats Foucault in snippets in different chapters. Furthermore, when he comes to a description and analysis of his own ethnographic data, the author seems to have forgotten to incorporate Foucault's perspectives. In addition, many of his other theoretical arguments and concepts do not seem to fit in the analysis of the Reiki healing sessions,

the meditation group, the different fairs, the Chrystal healing workshops, the anthroposophical group and the occult study group in which Wood participated. It is striking that the clear style of his descriptions of this field stands out against the complex style of the theoretical chapters.

To sum up, Wood's 'calling for a renewed commitment to a scholarly habitus that continually disposes sociologists' perceptions and practices towards the social contextualization of that which we study' should be appreciated. However, the structural and stylistic features of the book may possibly obstruct his good intentions.

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Indian Philosophy and the Consequences of Knowledge. Themes in Ethics, Metaphysics and Soteriology. By Chakravarthi Ram Prasad. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. xiv, 176 pp., ISBN 978-0-7546-5456-8.

Two hurdles this (indological) reviewer had to overcome while beginning the reading of this book. The author reports his son's bafflement "at why I should write a book that 'nobody will read'"; to which he reacts by saying that "I hope a consequence of his knowledge of his father's work will be that he will not end up a philosopher." (Preface, p. vii) This may be humorous and yet it conveys a demotivating sense of lack of conviction. A little further (Introduction, p. xii) the author contrasts his "engagement with the classical texts to develop philosophical arguments for our times" with the affirmation that the book "is certainly not meant to be a philological and historical anatomization of Indian thought." To derive philosophical arguments from texts which are not studied philologically and contextualized historically cuts the methodological ground from the claim to Indianness for whatever remains philosophically relevant for our times. 'Philosophical' to Ram Prasad is "a purely intellectual study of reality" (xi). A context for his philosophizing is provided, e.g. in the first chapter, by Jain philosophy ("my reading"). From this is developed "a worldview" for which Ram Prasad does not "make the narrow claim that this is what the classical Jaina thinkers said", though he also postulates that "there is no reason why Jainism should today reject the position that I have tried to present here." (xii) The title of the book had made me to expect more "Indian philosophy," less Ram Prasad's philosophy.

Having overcome these hurdles the reader who entrusts himself to Ram Prasad's logic and analytical acumen is rewarded by meticulously developed presentations of his positions: "Multiplism" in the realm of ethics (chapter 1); a study of the different positions concerning the "luminosity" of consciousness, i.e., its presence to itself (chapter 2); the discussion between Advaita and Mīmāṃsā about the interdependence of knowledge and action for bringing about liberation (chapters 3 and 4); the tension between the conceptuality — transcending nature of the Buddha's insight and the conceptuality — using nature of his subsequent teaching (chapter 5). The acknowledgements identify 6 articles as sources (previously published between 1999 and 2003). Evidently, there has been some reorganization and rethinking as the articles turned into a book.

A discussion of these philosophical problems would require to accept and to use the same tools and style of presentation chosen by Ram Prasad. To a readership who might have taken up the book less for its contribution to a technical analytical discussion (e.g., about the foundational arguments of

ethics or about the epistemology of consciousness studies in the framework of physicalism) but rather for its contribution to our understanding of Indian philosophy, the book raises critical questions on a meta-level concerning the Indianness in its title and of its approach rather than of its argumentation.

The diversity of schools and authors considered in its chapters confirms the inadequacy of the singular "Indian philosophy" in the title of the book. E.g., "the theories of luminosity defined" (55–57) may not be a complete list, but it contains Nyāya, Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, Yogācāra (Madhyamaka), Prābhākara, Advaita. ("Bhāṭṭa" refers to Kumārila and Pārthasārathi, Yogācāra-Madhyamaka are personified by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla.) The inspiration of Jainism for other chapters has already been referred to. Knowledge about these authors and schools and their place in the history of Indian philosophy is presupposed. Dates are rarely mentioned. (Philosophy and the arguments about its problems are timeless, it seems.) Yoga and Vaiśeṣika do not appear in the index; about Sāṃkhya there is one sentence in the book — "Indian philosophy"?

The themes selected are hardly the only ones discussed in the long history of Indian philosophy. Differences in epistemology, i.e., theories about consciousness, are related to differences in metaphysics (e.g. 69), but ever so often this level of metaphysics is deferred with remarks like "that we cannot go into here" (e.g., 62). The criteria for the selection made in this book might have been named and they could even have been discussed as a philosophical aspect of our knowledge about the consequences of Indian philosophy. (The paragraphs of pp. 89–90 might have been more useful in the introduction.) The purpose of these chapters is to enrich Western debates with arguments and concepts drawn from Indian philosophy. However, the positions then arrived at remain Western in language, conceptuality and problematic — even if it may be flattering to "Indian philosophy" that such appropriation is possible. The bibliography lists only publications written in (or translated into) English, and editions of Sanskrit texts. I am led to infer that "global philosophy" (dust cover), or "contemporary Western discussions" and "philosophical arguments for our times" (introduction) happen or should happen in English. The author does not see it as his task to translate texts (though there are appealing translations of terms in the book), but to 'translate' arguments in order to make intelligible the conceptual maps for thinking interculturally and transhistorically about knowledge, consciousness, action, liberation. The degree to which this attempt is deemed successful will depend on the importance given to historical contextualization.

If the problems and themes are "philosophical", why do they have to be identified as "Indian" — the preponderance of "philosophical" overriding the need to deal philologically with the sources? Would perhaps the Indianness of

philosophy lose some of its global and interdisciplinary appeal if the themes were "indologically" founded (leading "to a messy historical examination," p. 19)? Which leads me to suspect that the Indianness of philosophy points to a non-philosophical agenda (be it the author's or the publisher's), and to postulate that this be admitted and reflectively analysed.

Gandhi is called "India's greatest modern thinker" (49) and he is quoted with seven lines for what seems to be a summary of the position arrived at during the 49 preceding pages. The contrast between the lucidity of Gandhi's statement and the complexity of Ram Prasad's discussion for arriving at that conclusion is telling and characterizes the context of Ram Prasad's philosophizing. The book is demanding and complex, perhaps difficult for the non-specialist, but it is also thought-provoking and stimulating. Gandhi could be the "greatest modern thinker" without adopting the style of analytical philosophy. Ram Prasad wants to take us beyond Gandhi by analysing the logical presuppositions and/or consequences of his ethics. His way of using a quotation from Gandhi falls in the same category as his use of Jaina or Mīmāṃsā or Advaita (pro)positions. It is not the philosophical relevance but the conscious refusal to reflect the historical context which seems questionable to me — of Gandhi no less than of Jainism or of "contemporary Western discussions", but hardly the same in all the cases.

One gets the impression that the ultimate crux is how to deal conceptually or logically with Otherness (alterity) without ending up in contradiction (see especially ch. 1). Ram Prasad can conceive of denying reality to the Other ("overcoming the Other"), he can conceive of conceiving reality as multiple, but there is no way of philosophically consistently thinking reality as contradictory. Metaphysics is avoided also where Ram Prasad's own position is concerned. Students of religion might be led to reflect about the philosophical basis of a rational, historical study of religion where religion (or reality, or human beings) are not rational and logical and non-contradictory. Since the consequences of knowledge in Indian philosophy are said to concern soteriology, the book's discussions may indeed be seen as contributions to a philosophy of religion — without using the term. To have given an impulse for extending analytical reflection in this direction will certainly go to the credit of this book. If Ram Prasad's son won't read the book, those interested in secularly and philosophically dealing with Indian philosophy as a philosophy of religion might read it.

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Religious Studies. A Global View. Edited by Gregory D. Alles. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. 353 pp., ISBN 978-0-415-39743-8.

Upon being informed that Methodists were exhorted by women preachers in their open air meetings, Dr. Johnson is said to have remarked: Hearing of women preaching is like seeing dogs walking on their hind legs; one does not ask whether it is done well or not, but wonders that it is done at all. Reading that "the study of religions is a global enterprise" strikes as a novel claim and an excessive one. Religions are notorious for their linkage to hard and durable cultural particularities. ("Languages and religions became the privileged cultural locations in which the controversies of unity and difference were framed." Jonathan Z. Smith). Moreover the study of religions as pursued in universities is perhaps of all current academic endeavors the one most marked by features peculiar to Western Europe and a history shaped by the dialectic of Church and State. A few lines after the challenging sentence quoted above, the editor advances a more modest affirmation, which is verified by the ten chapters that follow: "scholars of religion are found throughout the world". The e. provided guidelines to the authors. Each chapter focuses on one of ten geographic areas and faces a different challenge.

Western Europe has a long "scientific" tradition in a variety of languages. The work produced is ancient and large, and frequently set benchmarks for the discipline. The a. exhibits good judgment and gives a rich bibliographic essay. But the section entitled "beyond the disciplinary boundaries" is too short. In France for instance, nearly all the work on Islam, African religions, or native religions in both Americas is done by people who would not identify professionally with "religious studies". The focus on regional studies is the rule. (See the organization of the Musée Guimet.) Western religious history has taken over where Church history left off and this is done in History departments. The same situation avails in Italy and Spain. The a. assumes too readily a rather full overlap between *Religionswissenschaft* and what travels in English under the label "study of religion". This is true only of Northern Europe.

Eastern Europe has a kaleidoscopic variety of languages and authors are usually aware of their own national cultural history. The link between religion and folklore has been explored in contexts where national identities had to struggle. The a. gives a precious bibliography, revealing a wealth of work (on Asian religions since a very early date, for instance) and is sensitive to social factors such as relative isolation and frequent emigration of scholars.

North Africa and West Asia is a hinge. First because the a. gives detailed attention to problems of nomenclature and their ideological implications (Middle East or West Asia?). Then because Muslims traveled, observed and

wrote what they saw. They also sought information on how to exercise rule over non-Muslim populations eight centuries before Western colonial rulers worried about that. So there is a body of works on religious varieties in Arabic and Persian, languages still alive in the production of knowledge. The a. then surveys the current institutional arrangements for the study of religion in NAWA. He concludes with a reference to the internalization of normative positivist scientific discourse by modernized religious people. The idea that Islam and science go together becomes the basis for alternatives to herme-neutic queries. I regret that the a. does not give bibliographic information on significant current publications.

Sub-Saharan Africa. A "rainbow of religion" is being studied in many places. At the origins, transmission of culture and critical reflection took place in oral forms. It would be a mistake to accept the modern slogan that in pre-colonial Africa "everyone" was religious. Religious studies thrive (relatively) in former British colonies. (The absence is noteworthy in previously French, Belgian and Portuguese colonies.) Parrinder promoted the idea of an "African Traditional Religion". Most departments of religious studies grew out of theological schools and the conflicts are not sharp between confessional approaches and the non confessional alternatives. Today work is mainly on African indigenous religions. Insider/outsider problems are complex since men study women's cults, Africans converted to Christianity or Islam study indigenous cults, and Africans who emigrated return to study local phenomena. A polemic against those who tried to find the Christian God in Africa has raged. The a. alludes to "borrowing" but the vexed problems of acculturation and syncretism are not focused on. There is one allusion to the spread of Pentecostalism but no look at the multitude of new religious movements. The a. refers to the impor-tant place religious practice and reflections play in the work of many African creative writers. The same point could be made about novels written in NAWA. There is work to be done here.

South and Southeast Asia. For South Asia (former British India minus Burma), the a. warns us that "religion" hardly exists as a separate discipline and that religion has been studied by historians, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists. The idea that Hinduism and caste provide the synthesis of India led to some political enthusiasms; there was also resistance. The Indo-logical tradition keeps working on the classical texts and anthropologists turn their interests to village life and "low traditions". The study of Muslims and Christians is often colored by problems of identity and linked to issues of communal violence. It has become apparent that "conversion" has been as an un-criticized concept and that the issues of syncretism and composite culture have been handled with insufficient skill. In Sri Lanka attention was paid to

the participation of Buddhism in ethnic militancy and violence. Sri Lankan scholars overseas produce (in English) first rate work which has no impact on undergraduate students in the Universities. Bangladesh and Pakistan do their work most of the time within conventional Islamic approaches. Most countries concentrate on the religion dominant in their population, but there are signs that this is changing. In *Southeast Asia* (from Myanmar to the Philippines) ethno-religious pluralism is the rule. Of the 50 universities in the area, four offer formally the subject "religious studies", two in Bangkok, one in Pnom Penh and one in Singapore. (Two of these teach in English.) September 11 has caused an increase of interest for "other religions". The a. provides nothing on Indonesia (population 235 millions) which hosted in 2004 a regional IAHR conference. Is this due to the fact that the teaching is done in Bahasa indonesia?

Continental East Asia. The a. of the section on China is a philosopher of religion who published numerous translations from English (Paul Tillich among them). He first stresses that the Han language had no word for "religion" and that one had to be invented in the late 19th century. He documents the adoption of ideals from the Enlightenment and the influence of imported traditions of historical and textual research as well as of John Dewey. After the Communist campaigns and the banning of "bourgeois pseudo-sciences", a rapid revival of religions started in 1978. Scholars turned to the study of religion as culture. Translations of Western texts and original publications boomed; journals became numerous. Debates occurred on whether Confucianism should be regarded as a religion. The a. identifies with a trend developing "theology in Chinese". Sociology and history of religion began to develop. Quality needs to be improved. In Korea too a word for religion had to be made up during the period of modernization. (The previous expression was "proper teachings".) Scholars began to acknowledge a variety of soteriologies. During the period of colonization by Japan, courses for the study of religion were inaugurated and often focused on folk belief. After WWII and the Korean War, Christianity rapidly expanded. Here too religious culture is the term preferred by scholars. Mircea Eliade was translated, and so were W. C. Smith and J. Z Smith. There is a history of the study of religion in Korea. In his bibliography, the a. has translated into English the titles of books published in Korean without giving the original title. (This is also some times the case with the bibliography on China.)

Japan started religious studies quite early, with concerns that were apologetic, rationalistic or with a view to understanding. It is often claimed that the Japanese are more scientific because of the lack of influence from Christian theology. Here too a word was coined for translating "religion". But Buddhists

had started much before contrasting the teachings of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Shinto was defined in the 19th century as not being a religion, on grounds of it consisting largely of ritual practices and its being a superior national cement. The first department of religious studies was established in 1905. Durkheim, Weber, Troeltsch and Wm. James were translated. Field work was undertaken in the new colonies. Many went to study abroad (mainly Germany). State Shinto was abolished in 1945 and scholars started trying harder to be neutral. Attention began being paid to the history of Shinto, to the processes of secularization and to the rise of new religious movements. (Only 30% of the population identifies with a particular religion.) Cooperation has started with other Asian scholars. The profession studied itself and the a. gives the results of his survey classifying university courses in 24 categories. The bibliography gives transliterated Japanese titles (with English translations).

North America. The a. chose to make first some observations. This area has sunk into monolingualism. (The Journal of the AAR does not review anymore books published in languages other than English.) Everybody is preoccupied with "diversity" and "the Other", but the vision of few extends beyond the national horizon. Reflexivity becomes a reflex. Some work on theory never gets tested by work on anything else. Post-modern speculations open the door to confessional resurgence. Freedom in inquiry is under threat. The 1991 revision of the Civil Rights Act allows institutions of learning supported by a particular religion to ensure that its employees work at propagating this religion. The survey on current work selects key issues and major books classified by themes. The emphasis is on theoretical and social scientific work. Comment is precise and apt. It is of course highly selective. But there are plenty other bibliographic resources on this area. Why nothing on Islam?

Latin America. Five authors discuss four countries and gender studies. This reflects availability of experts. There is no department in this field in Argentina. Programs in sociology and anthropology, started in Buenos Aires in the 1950ies, studied institutionalized religions and began work on indigenous groups, and on rural Creole and half-caste societies. In Brazil the history of religion begins with the early modern texts and images, first on indigenous then on Afro-Brazilian cultures. The study of religion in universities got consolidated in the 1970ies but suffered from the military dictatorship. Millennial movements, popular Catholicism, charismatic Catholicism were objects of penetrating studies. The phenomena of acculturation, *mestiçagem* and hybridation stared every one in the face and tools were elaborated to understand them. Protestant religions and the rise of evangelicals and Pentecostals also received much attention. Religious universities distrust the non-theological bent of the studies and public universities fear they are tainted. In Mexico

interest in the discipline is recent. The Cristero War (1926–1929) caused a policy of silence. The role of Catholicism in the history of Mexico is now acknowledged and studied. Since the 60ies liberation theology and Marxist studies broadened the topic. Research on lay movements highlighted diversity and internal contradiction in the supposedly homogeneous catholic fold. Growth of evangelical Protestantism became noted, and after being denounced as yet another Yankee infiltration began to be studied anthropologically. "Conversions" began to be seen as cultural appropriation and resistance to the power of local *caciques*. Cultural transformations of popular piety and new religious movements are objects of focus. Translocal studies investigate migrants' use of religion. In Peru, élites began in the late 19th century to take notice of Indians as part of the history. Andean archeology began in the 20th century and ethno-historical studies started in earnest. Colonial chronicles were put to good use. In the 1960ies departments of anthropology became interested in religion. Andeans accepted Christianity while integrating elements of their own religious system. Sociologists have studied Catholic Pentecostal movements, the role of protestant churches and the myth of the return of the Inca. Attention to gender issues was launched by liberation theologies.

In conclusion communication and cooperation between Latin American scholars is alive in conferences and associations. Religious pluralism seems more plural than in many other places. Studies show that it "both transcends and reflects historical, regional and class boundaries". The studies on the many varieties of syncretisms (through five centuries) make of Latin America "one of the main laboratories for studying relations between religion and society".

The editor's conclusion, "Toward a global vision", exploits a metaphor that has been successful since humans and cameras have been placed in orbit around the earth. And it uses (rough) statistical data culled from a study of tertiary educational institutions around the world. The share of students' enrolments in theology-religion has sharply declined since 1965 (but not as sharply as classics, archaeology and philosophy) but theology faculty has slightly increased in the last decade. Follows a nuanced discussion on whether the study of religion imposes Western science on the rest of the world and destroys other people's knowledge.

Two major sets of observations come to my mind.

1. It has been said that German philosophy was born in the protestant parsonage. Frequent references to divinity schools suggests that much that gets called "religious studies" in the English-speaking world is child of some variety of Protestant theology. (These Europeans were taught to place their spiritual aspirations in a secular historical context.) The a. on Sub-Saharan Africa refers to

the separation of Church and State to explain the absence of religious studies in the institutions of the former French colonies. But the absence is also to be noted in former Belgian or Portuguese colonies. The cause should be looked for in a deeper European division. This tradition also gave a core position to "world religions", a concept which, according to Tomoko Masuzava, made it possible to preserve European universalism in the language of pluralism. The privileged position is slowly being eroded, too slowly, I think. Many "indigenous" cults have become translocal and knock on the door of the "great" religions. Diaspora studies are taking off.

The evidence suggests that the best antidote to this ancient trend comes from ethnography and anthropology. The heavier share of this is taking place outside religion departments — hence a treatment that appears too scant. Talking about others requires askesis. Meeting adherents of other religions, learning another language, are formative influences that often go deeper than just working in another chemistry lab. Work is required on the conceptual make up the inquirer had at the beginning of the inquiry. The example of the great anthropologists and ethnologists should be placed alongside that of the great philologists. The ancient genre of travel narratives also gives precious insights. No human ever orbits over the rest of mankind, although some believe they do. The work of the Latin American scholars deserves becoming better known in this respect.

2. The matter of language. Now that the WTO has included education among the trade in services it regulates, one might welcome a countervailing influence from the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, now ratified by 76 states. Discussions of hegemonous cultures would be more fruitful than those about domination through science. The book alludes to the importance of translations. But do we know anything precise about the source and target languages used in our field? (Alan Williams discusses problems of translation, and the politics of it, in "New Approaches to the Problem of Translation in the Study of Religion", *New Approaches to the Study of Religion II*, edited by Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi M. Warne; Berlin, New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2004; 13–44.) The editor notes that the university enrollment in non-Western languages and literatures has dropped during the 20th century. Non-native speakers have clear career gains in being published in English. But can one see signs of a discriminating global public in our field? Can there be global standards other than the formal ones of universality and equality? It is notorious that undergraduate students resist or refuse reading material in language other than that in which they got their primary and secondary education. This can be deplored to be sure, but, if one is aiming at democratization of tertiary

education, it must be born with. Doesn't the future of the discipline depend also on publications in non-global languages? It is a common place that webs of scholarly networks should be multiplied. The pious wish is sometimes contradicted by fact. During the sessions of an IAHR regional conference (Bergen 2002), planning for the forthcoming Tokyo conference was opened for discussion. A colleague and I proposed that half a day (at a time when sessions are held in parallel) be devoted to meetings for Francophone and Hispanophone scholars, to be held in their languages. My point was that these scholars are scattered on two or three continents and would be encouraged to attend an international meeting if there was also an opportunity to meet and work with other scholars sharing the language of their scholarship. The proposal was defeated. I can only speculate about the reasons. Most of our religious traditions play sublime melodies on the theme of unity of mankind and their own universalism. But they protect their own particularity as they attack that of others. Heinrich Heine credited Luther with two achievements: he gave to his people "not only freedom of movement but also the means of movement. To the spirit he gave a body; he gave word to the thought". After nailing his 95 theses, he, by translating the Bible (which he considered to be The Book for all mankind), created a national language.

P. S. The Methodists were right to allow women to preach. And Gregory Alles is to be thanked for recruiting such a fine array of experts and providing them with good markers (that some did not follow). It is to be hoped that the book, full of relevant information and analysis, will be widely read and pondered.

Michel Despland
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Toward a Geographic Biography:
Mi la ras pa in the Tibetan Landscape

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Abstract

Few Tibetan figures have left an impression on the Himalayan landscape, both literary and geographic, as indelibly as Mi la ras pa (ca. 1028–1111), whose career as meditator and poet was punctuated by travel across the borderlands of southern Tibet. This essay will begin to address the defining role of place in Tibetan biographical literature by examining the intersections of text and terrain in the recording of an individual's life. In particular, this study examines sites of transformation in Mi la ras pa's biographical narratives, arguing for what might be called a geographic biography by examining the dialogical relationship between a life story recorded on paper and a life imprinted on the ground. It first considers the broad paradigms for landscaping the environment witnessed in Tibetan literature. It then examines ways in which the yogin's early biographical tradition treated the category of sacred place, creating increasingly detailed maps of the yogin's life, and how those maps were understood and reinterpreted. The paper concludes by addressing two specific modes of transformation in the life story — contested place and re-imagined place — exploring new geographies of consecration, dominion, and praxis.

Keywords

Tibet, Tibetan literature, Mi la ras pa, biography, hagiography, sacred geography

Geographic Lives

Few Tibetan figures have left an impression on the Himalayan landscape, both literary and geographic, as indelibly as Mi la ras pa (ca. 1028–1111), whose career as meditator and poet was punctuated by travel among mountain retreats across the borderlands of southern Tibet. Stories of his converting disciples, taming wild places, and

subjugating local spirits carved out a terrain fertile for the spread of dharma, thereby defining the contours of a Buddhist topography on both sides of the Himalayan range. Early versions of the biography recorded dozens of locations connected to his life. It was only at the close of the fifteenth-century, however, that the yogin's illustrious biographer Gtsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507) — the so-called "Madman of Tsang" — codified the map of authentic Mi la sites along this borderland, much as he standardized previous written accounts of the yogin's activities that were closely associated with them.

The life of a saint, it has been suggested, is a "composition of places," charting an itinerary of departures and returns that ultimately comes to define the life through the places it inhabits (Certeau 1988:281). Early scholars of Buddhism, including Alfred Foucher, noted the central role of place and pilgrimage in the development of the Buddha's biographical tradition.[1] Studies of East Asian traditions have explored the relationship between Buddhist lives and places.[2] Likewise, a general Tibetan tendency toward *topophilia* — to invoke Yi-fü Tuan's famous title — has been widely described, and the role of sacred landscape in the con-

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[1] This thesis is succinctly laid out in Foucher (1963:7–9). Tradition ascribes the origins of Buddhist pilgrimage and its delineation of sacred space to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, an important work from the Pāli canon recounting the final days of the Buddha's life. In this narrative, the Buddha himself enumerates four sites to be visited and venerated by his disciples after his passing: "Here the Tathāgata was born.... Here the Tathāgata attained supreme enlightenment.... Here the Tathāgata set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma.... Here the Tathāgata attained the Nibbāna-element without remainder" (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* 5.8; translation after Walshe [1987:263].) This passage famously describes these locations — later known as the *caturmahāprātihārya*, or the "four great wonders" — not with geographical place-names but in direct reference to the four central acts of the Buddha's life. Following Foucher's theory, Étienne Lamotte (1988:665) re-emphasized the relationship between text and terrain, noting that "It is not possible to separate the biography of the Buddha from the sacred topography of Buddhism." In his view, one of the earliest extensive accounts of the Buddha's life, the *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, appears in the form of an "enlarged... edition of several pilgrimage guide books placed end to end."

[2] See, for example, Grapard (1982); Shinohara (2003). The latter forms part of a publication directly addressing the intersections of sacred place and biography manifesting in various religious traditions across East, South, and Southeast Asia (although Tibet is conspicuously absent). See Granoff and Shinohara (2003).

text of Himalayan pilgrimage and ritual traditions has become a sub-field in its own right.[3] Austrian mountaineer (and companion of Heinrich Harrer) Peter Aufschnaiter was among the first to systematically document the sites associated with Mi la ras pa's life, based upon his explorations of the Skyid grong valley in southern Tibet.[4] Yet little attention has been paid to the relationship between sacred geography and narrative in the context of Tibetan life writing. The present essay will thus begin to address this lacuna in contemporary scholarship, examining the defining role of place in Tibetan biographical literature by surveying the intersections of text and terrain in the recording of Mi la ras pa's life story.

In what follows, I will propose two interrelated points about the relationship between biographical narrative and the formulation of sacred geography in Tibet. First, I would like to suggest that the topography of Mi la ras pa's life constitutes an important (but frequently overlooked) form of life writing in its own right, what might be considered geographic biography. The places associated with a life, set forth in literature, can also be read on the ground as a kind of biographical text. The notion of a geographic biography is thus useful as a means for teasing out the relationship between Tibetan life writing and sacred geography while critically addressing received notions about the forms they inhabit.

Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition is valuable here because it forms such a rich intertextual archive, preserving materials that range from simple vitae to detailed compendia. The earliest examples, originating in the records of his direct disciples, grew increasingly complex, and culminate in the standard two-volume edition (the *Life* and *Collected Songs*) in 1488, nearly four centuries after the yogin's death. Together, these sources offer fertile soil for excavating layers of representation that, in cross-section, reveal the programmatic purposes that life writing served in Tibet (much as it did in Medieval Europe). As Mi la ras

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[3] Recent publications include Diemberger (1991, 1993); Ehrhard (1997, 1999a, 1999b); Huber (1999a, 1999b); and MacDonald (1997).

[4] Aufschnaiter's observations first appeared in his posthumous publication "Lands and Places of Milarepa." See Aufschnaiter (1976). For an English translation of his journals, which make frequent mention of Mi la ras pa and the yogin's meditation sites, see Brauen (2002).

pa's followers coalesced into the Buddhist traditions known as the Bka' brgyud (literally, Oral Transmission), stories of the yogin's life thus became a powerful vehicle for promoting personal, institutional, or doctrinal considerations, including the claiming, demarcating, and mapping of sacred space.

The narrative tradition of Mi la ras pa's life is also relevant in this context because it foregrounds the role of place, even as it simultaneously deemphasizes the element of time. The life story records only the most general sense of time passing: Mi la's early childhood folds into his later years with very few external temporal markers. The Songs compress the element of time even further, serving as biographical networks largely synchronic in nature. Several Tibetan commentators have plotted general chronologies of Mi la ras pa's life, calculating the period he spent with Mar pa (1002/12–1097) and the length of his various retreats, yet even the most basic temporal facts of his biography — the dates of his birth and death — are hotly contested.[5] Instead, the biographical tradition manifests largely in terms of place: regions through which Mi la traveled, caves in which he meditated, where he met disciples, tamed demons, sang his songs. Reading through the extensive biographies, we find long lists of the places in Mi la's life but have almost no idea when he visited them.

The second point I would like to argue is that the topography of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition was unstable, subject to both change and revision much like its literary cousin. As individual locations evolved over time, they appear to have served as powerful sites for remembering episodes of the yogin's life story and for re-recording how those stories were told. The sites of transformation in the geographic biography thus reveal a dialogical relationship between a life story recorded on paper and a life imprinted on the ground. Biographical narratives may landscape the terrain, but sacred sites in turn serve to re-imagine how those narratives can be written and read.

Recent studies in geography have begun to argue against notions of place as a static dimension, "devoid of effect or implications" (Massey 1994:3). Rather, place is unstable and changing, not unlike the bio-

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[5] For an extensive chronological analysis of Mi la ras pa's life, see Tshe dbang nor bu, SDN. Chos kyi dbang phyug, in his DTL, and Zhi byed ri pa, in NDO, also attempt to reconstruct chronologies of the yogin's life.

graphical tradition itself; each may transform, and be transformed, over time. In some cases, the ground itself is understood as having the potential to move: China maintains "floating" mountains; sacred peaks are said to have "flown" from India to Japan; the very earth of Tibet is described as being restrained by a series of "taming" temples to insure its receptivity to Buddhism.[6] Sacred sites could be transported and transplanted, most famously illustrated by the Indian Mount Potalaka in the form of Lhasa's Potala Palace, revered as the abode of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who is believed to manifest in the figure of the Dalai Lamas. Tibet imported India's complex system of sacred lands (*pīṭha*) to reconstruct a native geography based upon tantric traditions of literature and practice. Sacred places could also move within Tibet's own borders, as did the acclaimed mountain pilgrimage of Tsā ri, recreated in eastern Tibet as the retreat hermitage Rin chen brag called Tsa 'dra, literally "like Tsā ri."[7] Buddhist traditions therefore seem to have understood, at least implicitly, the dynamic and unfixed nature of sacred places.

Traditional geographic theory, often labeled "environmental determinism," long held that "it is place that creates man and his culture as well as his character, rather than the other way round" (Smith 1987:30). Yet, as J. Z. Smith has proposed, "What if space were not the recipient but rather the creation of the human project? What if place were an active production of intellection rather than its passive receptacle?" (ibid. 26).

Such a position was not unknown to Tibetan commentators. A century and a half prior to Smith's query, Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837), the famed nineteenth-century scholar from Brag dkar rta so in southern Tibet, argued for a similar case about the intersection of person and place. He noted two modes of interaction between people and places: sacred sites that are blessed by individuals and individuals who are blessed by sacred sites.[8] This perhaps echoes the mainstream

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[6] On the flying mountains of Japan see Grapard (1982); flying mountains in Tibet, and references to Chinese hovering mountains, are described in Buffetrille (1996). On the taming of the Tibetan landscape in relation to the introduction of Buddhism, see Aris (1979) and Gyatso (1989).

[7] On the geography of Tsa 'dra, see Ngawang Zangpo (2001).

[8] Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 8b.

Buddhist belief that a sacred site may be transformed through a charismatic figure's consecration, just as visitors to that site at a later time are themselves transformed long after the original individual has gone. Following this lead, the present essay will consider sacred place not (or not only) as the passive product of a powerful master's blessing (*byin rlabs*) or auspicious connection (*rten ʾbrel*) as recorded in texts, but as playing a creative and dynamic role in the formation of his life story and biographical tradition. Though mountain caves served as Mi la's home for much of his life, their locations and their understanding within the tradition were not carved in stone; they were unstable, magma-like, continuing to transform even as the strata of his literary life story coalesced and solidified.

What implications does this then have for the kind of life writing in Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition? To a large degree, the recording of a life is an act of memory: memorializing the lives of others, crafting a memoir of one's own. Indeed, one of the yogin's earliest biographers, Ngan rdzong ras pa Byang chub rgyal po (b. eleventh century) was renowned for his mnemic skills, and his colophons describe his motivation from fear that his guru's life story will be forgotten — a theme common to many Tibetan biographies.[9] Pertinent to the present con-

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[9] Ngan rdzong ras pa's own biography opens with a verse praising his faculty of perfect memory:

> I respectfully bow down at the feet of Ngan rdzong ston pa:
> Learned sovereign who first perfected study,
> Accomplished sovereign who then perfected meditation,
> The one named Bo[dhi] [Ra]ja, scholar-adept who attained an indelible memory.

See Dam pa ras chen, NDN, 2. (*dang por sbyangs pa mthar phyir <phyin> mkhas paʾi gtso/ der rjes sgom pa mthar phyin grub paʾi gtso/ mkhas grub mi rjed gzungs thob bo jiʾi mtshan/ ngan rdzong ston paʾi zhabs la gus phyag ʾtshal/*) His biography then continues: "He brought appearances under his power and then performed inconceivable enlightened activity in taming disciples. He attained an indelible memory and then compiled the sayings of the great Rje btsun Mi la ras pa, thereby benefiting beings." (ibid. 15: *snang ba dbang du ʾdus nas gdul nas gdul bya phrin las bsam gyi mi khyab pa mdzad/ mi rjed paʾi gzungs thob nas/ rje btsun chen po mi la ras paʾi gsung sgros bkaʾi bsdu ba mdzad pas sems can la phan btags/*)

The term used to describe Ngan rdzong's abilities (*mi brjed paʾi gzung*), literally "the memory (or retention) that does not forget," is here rendered as "indelible memory." The Tibetan *gzung* — defined as "retaining the words and the meaning of dharma

text, however, Edward Casey has described a particularly close relationship between place and memory, arguing that "memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported … a place wherein the past can revive and survive"; memory, he notes, is "a place for places" (Casey 1987:186).[10] And insofar as life writing serves as an exterior narrative

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without forgetting them" (*chos kyi tshig don mi brjed par ʾdzin pa*) — was also used by Tibetan translators to render the Sanskrit *dhāraṇī*. The word is frequently understood as referring to a kind of magic formula, ranging in length from a single syllable to the entire Sanskrit alphabet, and often devoid of any clear semantic meaning. In that context, a *dhāraṇī* is believed to capture and retain the essence of an element of the Buddhist teaching or a text describing it, a function illustrated by the term's foundation in the verbal root "to hold" (*dhṛ*). *Dhāraṇīs* are also believed to serve as a form of protection, in which case they may be compared with the *paritta* of the Pāli canon, although they are most frequently discussed in relation to mantra, found in the literature of both the sūtras and the tantras. For a discussion of the literature pertaining to *dhāraṇī* and mantra, and the relationships between the two, see Gyatso (1992:198 n. 11). In a broader sense, however, the term *dhāraṇī* refers to a form of memory. According to the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa*,

> *Dhāraṇī* is to keep, retain in memory and not forget, to truly retain by remembrance the eighty-four thousand multitudes of religion…. Again, *dhāraṇī* is that by which one retains the sayings of all the bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, śrāvakas and all living beings, that by which one retains all good sayings without remainder. (Quoted in Braarvig [1985:18])

The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* classifies four types of *dhāraṇī*: (1) dharma *dhāraṇī* (2) meaning *dhāraṇī* (*arthadhāraṇī*), (3) mantra *dhāraṇī*, and (4) forbearance *dhāraṇī* (*kṣāntidhāraṇī*) (ibid. 19–20). Of these, the first refers to the mnemic ability to retain in memory the formulation of oral or written dharma, such as a sermon or a book, for an infinite period of time. The second category identifies the ability to retain the meaning of those teachings, and not just the syntactic formation of their words. Mantra *dhāraṇī* refers to the verbal formula employed by a bodhisattva for the benefit of beings; it is both the formula retained in mind and the efficacy retained by the formula. Forbearance *dhāraṇī* refers to the bodhisattva's realization, gained through the use of a *dhāraṇī* formula, that the ultimate nature lies beyond verbal expressions. Thus, if in this context *dhāraṇī* might be translated as "the power of retaining in memory … through memory of extraordinary power," the term describes both the faculty of memory and the remembrance itself.

[10] In a subsequent publication, Casey further explores the philosophical implications of place, "its power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, and tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as where we are *not*)" (Casey 1993:xv).

of memory, it too seems to be naturally place oriented: a place where both the past and its places survive. In this sense, biography appears to preserve a form of what Casey has called "place memory," the representation of the past in its own place. Here, place-memory describes the underlying narratives preserving an individual's life as being both place oriented and place saturated.

Place memory also describes a quality of places themselves: the ability of place to serve as a "container of experiences," holding narratives of the past in place (Casey 1987:187). In this case, it aptly designates the memory of an individual in a place and in reference to that place (ibid.). The relationship between life and landscape thus forms a dialogue in which biographical narrative creates and preserves the sacred space inhabited by an individual, while specific sites serve as a parallel means for remembering and re-imagining an individual's life in those places. Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition thus serves as the memory of his life firmly situated in the topography of his life story. Landscape forms the fundament upon which Mi la ras pa's life might be written, but it also records and preserves the life story as if they were inscribed in the rocky cliffs and lush forests of the Himalayan borderlands. The conundrum of place, Casey has noted, is that it is unstable and changing, while persisting as memory. This essay will argue for an understanding of place as unstable, while persisting through the memory of individuals whose lives were spent there, and through which their lives were written.

Paradigms for Landscaping the Environment

Before turning to the details of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition, it will be useful to briefly review some of the paradigms through which Tibetan sacred geography has taken shape. Accounts of Buddhism's early transplantation in the high plateau are grounded, literally, in the Tibetan soil. In turn, the Himalayan ground has largely been shaped through a process that will later be described as landscaping: the production and formulation of sacred space through a variety of means. Although literary, ritual, and other praxis-oriented traditions may form and reform landscape, in the present context it is the narrative traditions of Mi la ras pa's life story that shape the land.

In Tibet's myth of origins for the Buddhist domination over its indigenous religion, the landscape is imagined as a great supine demoness (*srin mo*) spread across the earth, an obstructing force antithetical to the "civilizing" influences of the *Buddhadharma*. It is Tibet's great religious monarch and consolidator of its early empire Srong btsan sgam po (d. 649) who is said to have first subdued this demoness, paving the way for his empire's gradual conversion. To do so, he famously constructed a series of "taming temples," effectively pinning down the demoness at various points on her body and rendering her ineffective, but also inscribing a new hierarchy of Tibetan space imagined as radiating out toward an untamed frontier from the Jo khang temple in Lhasa resting upon her heart at the center.[11]

But it is the extensive biographical tradition of Padmasambhava — the eighth-century tantric adept of India, the Precious Guru (Guru Rin po che), and Tibet's "Second Buddha" — and the literature attributed to him therein, that has served to shape much of Tibet's sacred landscape. This is evident most clearly in stories of the adept's own subjugation, several generations after the Tibetan king, of the hosts of malevolent non-human beings inimical to Buddhism believed to populate the countryside. Perhaps the clearest example of the early creation of Tibetan sacred space is in Padmasambhava's formulation of "hidden lands" (*sbas yul*) — sanctuaries for meditation practice and refuges from the harsh realities of war and social strife — ascribed to him in the form of revealed guidebooks and catalogues. Such natural enclaves mark the borders of Tibet, Nepal, India, and Bhutan, spanning both sides of the Himalayan slope.

Several centuries later, during the period of the subsequent dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet (*phyi dar*), and within several generations of Mi la ras pa's death, influential Bka' brgyud masters began to promote new — or at least newly imagined — conceptions of Tibetan sacred geography. These most famously crystallized through the visionary geography of recently translated Indian tantric literature, and served to support the nascent communities of yogic practitioners that began to spread. The organization of Tibetan sacred space and places reached a crescendo

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[11] See Aris (1979), chapter 1, and Gyatso (1989).

about a century after Mi la's biographer Gtsang smyon Heruka's own literary endeavors as the fifteenth century drew to a close.

The early 1600s witnessed a resurgence of literature attempting to "revive, by way of new foundations or renovations of old structures," a sacred landscape dating from earlier periods of the Tibetan kingdom (Ehrhard 1999b:240). These writings largely belong to a Tibetan genre known as "treasure" (*gter ma*), texts believed originally to have been hidden by Padmasambhava in the eight century, which were then recovered many centuries later by a special class of individuals known as "treasure revealers" (*gter ston*).[12] In many cases, the sites described in such texts were originally associated with charismatic figures in Tibetan history, possessing "special qualities because of the spiritual presence of Padmasambhava or the early yogins of the Bka' brgyud pa school"; foremost among the latter, of course, was Mi la ras pa himself (Ehrhard 1999b:240).[13] Authors and commentators were then free to order and categorize these sites as part of their contemporary religious milieu.

It is against such a backdrop that this survey of Mi la ras pa's geographic biography should be viewed. This will begin with the broad representations of place in Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition, and

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[12] For a brief overview of the treasure tradition in Tibet, see Doctor (2005). On the use of this system as a means of legitimating new forms of literature, see Gyatso (1993).

[13] These schemes could take many forms. One influential system classified a series of sacred sites in relation to the attributes of Padmasambhava based, according to tradition, on his own prophecies. This system identified five "isolated sacred sites" (*dben gnas*) representing the master's body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities, to which three additional sites — including Spa gro Stag tshang, the "tiger's den" — are occasionally appended. See the list in Ricard (1994:272 n. 59). This categorization of sacred places occurred at least as early as the fourteenth century in Padmasambhava's famed biography *Padma bka' thang yig*, a treasure text discovered by O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323). See Ehrhard (1999b:249 n. 2.) A more recent system, based upon a treasure revelation by Mchog 'gyur Bde chen gling pa (1829–1870) in 1857, identifies twenty-five sacred sites describing locations blessed by Padmasambhava during the course of his life. On this tradition and its wider political context, see Gardner (2006); and Dudjom Rinpoche (1991, vol. 1:518; vol. 2:43 n. 558, 181). This network rose to prominence through the conjunction of powerful and charismatic figures aligned in the so-called nonsectarian movement (*ris med*) based in eastern Tibet, primarily Khams, and helped to define a broad sense of regional Khams pa identity.

how those representations changed over time from the earliest sources to the standard version produced some four centuries later. The following sections will discuss the dynamic interaction of life-texts and life-maps by identifying two sites of geographic formation and transformation: (1) contested place, in which layers of biographical writing appear in conflict or conversation about geographic locations visited first by Padmasambhava and then Mi la ras pa; and (2) re-imagined place, where new life-maps are superimposed upon a known landscape, such as those charting Mi la's progression in the practice of tantric yoga.

Mapping Mi la ras pa's Life

As suggested by a recent title on the study of life writing, one function of biography is the mapping of lives (France and St. Clair 2002). While the maps of that publication are symbolic of the "the functions which [biography] can serve and has served in different societies, its *uses*," they need not only function metaphorically; life stories can also map — in a literal sense — the topography of an individual's life (ibid. 4). If biographical maps are not simply metaphors, neither are the maps of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition purely generic or theoretical, as the yogin's life story served to claim specific sites for followers in his tradition. The catalogue of places codified in the standard *Life* and *Songs* led to a thriving pilgrimage tradition among innumerable retreat sites and meditation caves.

The sites most clearly established in Gtsang smyon Heruka's texts became an important part of almost any trip through the southern border regions of Tibet and Nepal. This was true for individuals of all sectarian affiliations, from the 'Brug pa and 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud followers of Mi la ras pa who visited them in great numbers to Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (b. 1760), the famed eighteenth-century Dge lugs statesman whose autobiography documents his great interest in Mi la ras pa and the places associated with his life.[14] Many of these sites are located, perhaps unsurprisingly, on or near the traditional trade and pilgrimage routes between Tibet and Nepal, especially those in Mang

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[14] See Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, GZN.

yul, Skyid grong, and La phyi. Tibetans frequently visited these sites as part of a pilgrimage to Kathmandu. Modern-day yogins continue to visit and practice in Mi la's meditation caves. One site — the cave known as Hovering in Space (Nam mkha' lding) — has become an obligatory tourist destination for foreign visitors as they descend Tibet's high plateau for the lush valleys of Nepal.

To unfold the maps of Mi la ras pa's life, we turn first to the texts themselves. The earliest works in the biographical tradition are extremely conservative in their recording of biographical space. These texts tend to emphasize general setting (the mountains of Mang yul, or the forest of Sing ga la) over specifically named meditation sites, demarcating only a few keystone locations, such as Mi la's principal retreat known as White-rock Horse-tooth (Brag dkar rta so). The earliest known biographical works, such as those by Mi la ras pa's direct disciple Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153) and his contemporary Bla ma Zhang (1123–1193) record virtually no locations by name apart from general references to a few prominent locations such as La phyi and Brin.[15] The next datable biography, by the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud master Don mo ri pa (b. 1203) preserves several new locations, referred to as "caves," including Pigeon Cave (Phug ron phug), as well as "fortresses" (*rdzong*), such as Enlightenment Fortress (Byang chub rdzong).[16] The ideal of the meditation fortress, witnessed here for the first time, will later come to dominate the landscape as an important geographical marker.

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[15] The authorship, and therefore the date, of some writings included in Sgam po pa's Collected Works have been called into question by both Tibetan historians and contemporary scholarship. See, for example, the comments in Jackson (1990:2).

[16] The writings of Don mo ri pa are contained in a larger, and later, biographical collection by Rdo rje Mdzes 'od (active mid-fourteenth century): *Bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar chen mo rin po che'i gter mdzod dgos 'dod 'byung gnas [Great Biographies of the Kagyu: A Treasury of Jewels, the Source for All Wishes]* (Bir, India: D. Tsondu Senghe 1985). While this compilation appears to date from the mid-fourteenth century, all but the final few biographies were written perhaps a century earlier by Don mo ri pa (b. 1203) around 1245. These life stories are described as having been dictated by Don mo ri pa's guru, known as Ri khrod dbang phyug (1181–1225), who was himself a spiritual grandson (*yang slob*) of Phag mo gru pa; this would place the biography of Mi la ras pa only four teacher-student generations from the yogin himself. See Roberts (2007:9). A partial (and fairly loose) English translation of Rdo rje mdzes 'od's text was published in Gyaltsen and Huckenpahler (1990).

The first systematic mapping of the yogin's life appears late in the thirteenth century, in a text called *The King of Rje btsuns*. Its author, Rgyal thang pa Bde chen rdo rje (thirteenth century), draws upon earlier works to develop, perhaps for the first time, a new category of preeminent meditation sites: the six fortresses (*rdzong drug*).[17] In his seventeenth chapter, the second of two verses describing the yogin's period of intense meditation and ascetic retreat, Rgyal thang pa enumerates these sites in the following way, naming only four of the six locations:[18]

1. Red Rock Fortress of Ling nga (Ling nga brag dmar gyi rdzong)
2. Shadow Fortress of Smin rgyud (Smin rgyud grib ma'i rdzong)
3. Celestial Fortress of Rkyang dpal (Rkyang dpal nam mkha'i rdzong)
4. Enlightenment Fortress of Rag ma (Rag ma byang chub kyi rdzong)

These are all situated in the Mang yul/Skyid grong valley near Mi la's principal retreat site at Brag dkar rta so, which is itself strangely absent from the list.

The twenty-fifth and penultimate chapter of Rgyal thang pa's work catalogues Mi la ras pa's geo-biography in even greater detail. This section first registers the locations he visited and then lists the disciples he trained. Gtsang smyon Heruka's own version of the life story closely follows Rgyal thang pa's framework here, possibly drawing on it as a conceptual model for his own penultimate chapter.[19] Rgyal thang pa begins with the verse:

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[17]   The text is found in a collection of Bka' brgyud biographies titled *Gser ri'i phreng ba'i rnam thar [The Garland Biographies of Golden Mountain]* published as *Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng: A Thirteenth Century Collection of Verse Hagiographies of the Succession of Eminent Masters of the 'Brug-pa dkar-brgyud-pa Tradition* (Tashijong, India: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang 1973). Rgyal thang pa's dates have been discussed in Roberts (2007:11). Tiso (1989) also presents a study of this text.

[18]   Rgyal thang pa, JGM, 227.

[19]   Gtsang smyon Heruka was the first author to publish Mi la ras pa's Life and Songs as separate volumes. In doing so, he inserted into the biography a brief summary of events that occur in Songs; this constitutes much of the Life's eleventh chapter.

> Thus, yogin Rje btsun Mid la
> Stayed not there [at rest] but [left] for Mnga' ris skor gsum,
> G.yas ru Byang, Gtsang, and places like that.
> I bow with devotion to his roaming 'round mountain retreats.[20]

The prose commentary then describes the yogin's travel across Tibet, systematically enumerating sites as if marking points on the compass, laying survey stakes to define the sphere of Mi la ras pa's activity.[21] Indeed, at each locale the chapter describes Mi la ras pa as having "planted the teachings of the practice lineage" (*sgrub brgyud kyi bstan pa gtsugs*). Unlike the six fortresses above, however, these locations lack the poetic names often associated with the yogin's retreat sites, and are instead structured almost entirely along political, administrative, and regional lines. The list begins in the region of far western Tibet called Stod Mnga' ris skor gsum, including Mt. Kailāsa and Lake Manasārowar, and then records Pu rang, Blo bo, Gung thang, and Mang yul.[22] Although not stated explicitly in the text, together these locations encompass both upper and lower Mnga' ris (Mnga' ris stod and Mnga' ris smad) and thus the entire sweep of far western Tibet is placed under Mi la ras pa's feet.[23]

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[20] Rgyal thang pa, JGM, 255. *de lta'i rje btsun mid la rnal 'byor pas// sa der ma bzhugs mnga' ris skor gsum dang// g.yas ru byang rtsang ga <gi> sa cha sogs// ri khrod phyogs med 'grims la gus phyag 'tshal//.*

[21] Tiso's translation (1989:422) appears to miss Rgyal thang pa's conceptual layout of the geography.

[22] Rgyal thang pa, JGM, 256. Although Sgam po pa and Bla ma Zhang both describe Mi la ras pa's cremation at Mt. Kailāsa, this may be the earliest reference to his activities in that location. This is one of the few versions known to refer to Pu rang, south of Kailāsa, near the border of western Nepal. Blo bo, a corruption of Glo bo, refers to modern day Mustang in northwestern region of Nepal formerly aligned with the kingdoms of Mnga' ris. Gung thang and Mang yul are the regions associated with Mi la ras pa's homeland and early meditation.

[23] General Tibetan conceptions of their landscape describe the terrain in the far west as geographically high in elevation and sloping downward to the east. The Tibetan designation *stod* (upper) usually refers to locations further west and higher, and *smad* (lower) to those further east and lower. See Aris (1979:18 ff.).

Location Map
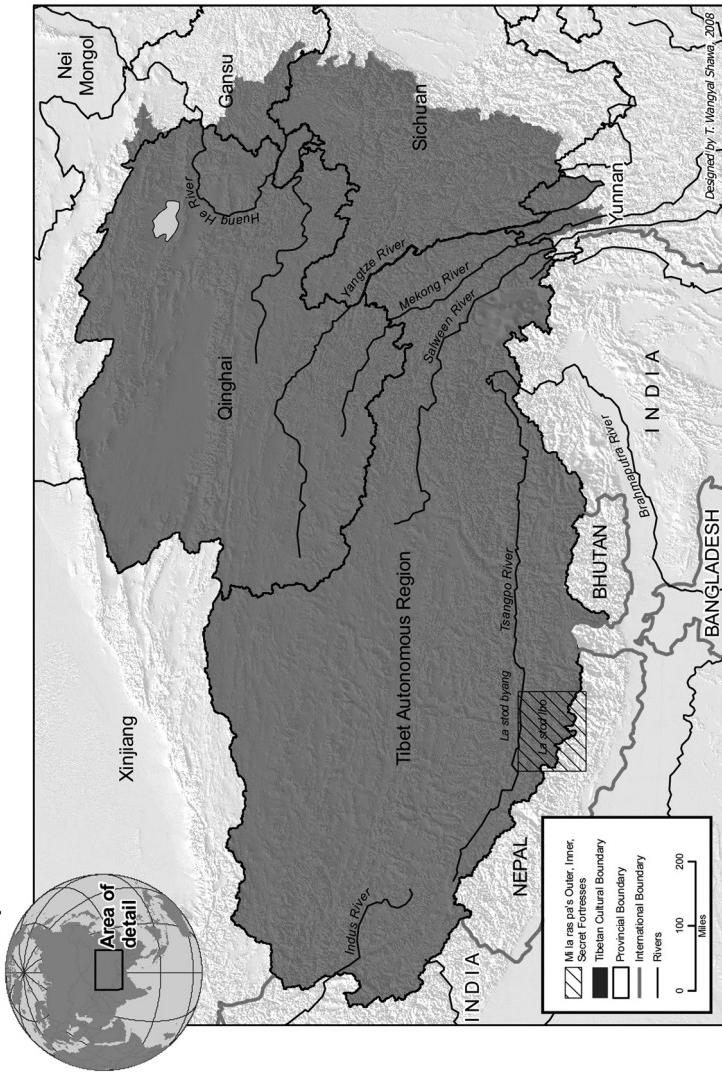
Map 1: Cultural Tibet

The chapter next describes Mi la's travels through southwestern Tibet, specifically designated in the text as La stod G.yas ru lho byang. This is a compound toponym that may be understood in the following way. The central Tibetan regions of Dbus and Gtsang were comprised of four military and administrative units (*ru*, literally "horns") established during Tibet's dynastic period in the seventh and eighth centuries: G.yas ru and Ru lag in Gtsang, G.yo ru and Dbu ru in Dbus.[24] G.yas ru thus comprises one-half of Gtsang.[25] La stod lho (southern La stod) and La stod byang (northern La stod) each form one of the thirteen administrative regions or "myriarchies" (*khri skor*) of central and western Tibet said to have been established by the Yuan court and placed under the direction of 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280), the acclaimed thirteenth-century Sa skya hierarch.[26] (Refer to Map 1.) Here, the text describes how Mi la traveled through G.yas ru, first visiting Lha stod lho and then La stod byang, each of which is further demarcated by listing four distinct locations. This is most clearly depicted in outline form:[27]

I. [G.yas ru] La stod lho:
   1. Ding ri[28]
   2. Bong shod[29]
   3. Shri ri[30]
   4. Khrom[31]

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[24] For an analysis of this system largely based upon early sources, see Uray (1960).

[25] The *Mkhas pa lde'u Chos 'byung*, a thirteenth-century work whose author was likely a close contemporary of Rgyal thang pa, demarcates the boundaries of G.yas ru as follows: Srag [Brag] gi glang ma gur phub (east); Bye ma la dgu (west); Rmi sti chu nag (north); Snye nam g.yag po sna (south); Shangs kyi zhong tshal (center). See Mkhas pa lde'u, KDC, 272.

[26] On the formation of the *khri skor*, see Petech (1990:50 ff.). By the mid-fourteenth century, La stod byang was centered around the monastery of Byang Ngam rings and La stod lho around Shel dkar rdzong (ibid. 53) While the *khri skor* largely replaced the *ru bzhi* as a means of geo-political organization, later writers continued to use the system of "horns" as a broad territorial framework. See Uray (1960:34 n.9.).

[27] See Rgyal thang pa, JGM, 256–57.

[28] The well-known village and center of religious activities for individuals such as Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas and Ko brag pa.

[29] A location in the Rtsib ri region of southwest Tibet.

[30] An alternate, and ancient, name for the sacred mountain (*gnas ri*) Rtsib ri.

[31] Unidentified, although a location called Rgyal khrom is mentioned in the *Shel dkar Chos 'byung*. See Wangdu and Diemberger (1996:46).

II. G.yas ru [La stod] byang:
 1. Rgyal thang brgya[d] bcu'i brag[32]
 2. Shel lcag[33]
 3. Glu rgyal gling po[34]
 4. Mchog dkar gyi brag[35]

Further study may clarify how each sub-location served to circumscribe the larger geo-political region. Rgyal thang pa's intent, however, seems clear: to demonstrate how Mi la ras pa's activities systematically claimed large areas of Tibet's southwest as part of the Bka' brgyud sectarian landscape. With the geographic biography in its infancy, the emphasis here is not on the creation of new space but rather the transfer into Mi la ras pa's dominion topographic features and administrative zones already on the map. In doing so, the author situates Mi la ras pa, anachronistically it seems, in a landscape that did not exist until the yogin had been dead for more than a century. But this is perhaps unsurprising since 'Phags pa, the author's contemporary, granted initiation to Qubilai Qan who, in 1264, reciprocated by presenting the Tibetan ruler with political control over Tibet in the form of the thirteen myriarchies. Here, Mi la ras pa's geographic biography (and by extension, the yogin's Bka' brgyud tradition) appears to push back against the newly emerging Sa skya hegemony. Indeed, the narrative concludes by affirming that "The one called Lord Mi la himself traveled among mountain retreats without partiality in order to plant the teachings of the practice lineage (*sgrub brgyud*) in every direction, and then carried out the limitless benefit of transmigrating beings."[36]

This last line carries an unintended note of irony, however, since so many of these places were forgotten in the subsequent biographical

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[32] Unidentified, although it clearly does not refer to the Rgyal thang of southern Khams in eastern Tibet, as asserted by Tiso. The *Shel dkar Chos 'byung* refers to Rgyal nor, established by village communities from Khams. See Wangdu and Diemberger (1996:34, 112). The TBRC database mentions a Rgyal thang dgon in Snye mo district.
[33] Unidentified.
[34] Unidentified.
[35] Unidentified.
[36] Ibid. 259. *rje mid la ces pa de nyid kyis/ phyogs thams cad du sgrub brgyud kyi bstan pa gtsugs pa'i phyir/ phyogs med kyi ri khrod du gshegs nas/ 'gro ba sems can pa'i don tshad med pa mdzad do//.*

tradition; some cannot be identified today. Later authors appear to have largely rejected Rgyal thang pa's early attempt at charting the yogin's life in terms of existing geo-political boundaries, turning instead toward increasingly symbolic topographic structures. The result is that the locations recorded in this work have literally been wiped off the map. We are left with a faint echo of their names even if we can no longer visit them. This seems to illustrate the deeply literary nature of sacred biography, with such places appearing like a tantalizing list of texts preserved in a historical source but which are no longer extant.

The process of cataloguing individual sites of Mi la's practice, in addition to naming new ones, matured within the next literary stratum, a number of extensive and comprehensive works produced in the centuries following Mi la ras pa's death.[37] In as many as seventy discrete chapters, these Collected Songs (and to a lesser extent, the Lives proper) form geographic atlases, much as they do song collections, preserving the names of individual locations together with brief anecdotes of the yogin's activities in them. In general, they show little evidence of Rgyal thang pa's concern with spatial arrangement or local geo-politics. Instead, they tend to foreground symbolic categories and classifications of space, illustrated here by a variant but more complete form of the six fortresses, identical in each of the major compendia:[38]

1. Winning Enlightenment Fortress of Rag ma (Rag ma byang chub bsgrub pa'i rdzong)
2. Celestial Fortress of Spos ri spos mthon (Spos ri spos mthon nam mkha' rdzong)

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[37] This refers principally to three comprehensive versions of the life story: (1) the so-called *Twelve Great Disciples* (*Bu chen bcu gnyis*), BC; (2) *The Black Treasury* (*Mdzod nag ma*), Rang byung rdo rje (attributed), DNM; and (3) *A River of Blessings* (*Byin rlabs kyi chu rgyun*), Anonymous, JLC. The considerable uncertainty surrounding the second source listed here has grown recently, with the acquisition of new manuscripts in my possession and with the publication of several new versions of the life story in Rang byung rdo rje's Collected Works. See Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje'i gsung 'bum, Vol. Ga (Ziling: Tshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis 2006).

[38] See BCN, 108a; DNM, 138a.6; JCGS, 302.8. Gtsang smyon Heruka imports this list in its entirety, although he changes the name of #5 to Stag phug senge rdzong, as part of a strategy to emphasize the latter location in Yol mo, Nepal. Cf. Gtsang smyon Heruka, NG, 523; Chang (1962:364). The English translations provided for many of these place names are provisional.

3. Agate Sanctuary Garuḍa Fortress of Brag dmar (Brag dmar mchongs gling khyung gi rdzong)
4. Cheerful Cave Sun Fortress of Mon (Mon gyi skyid phug nyi ma'i rdzong)
5. Crystal Cave Bamboo Fortress of Ka ti (Ka ti shel phug chu shing rdzong)
6. Central Channel Fortress of Brag dkar rta so (Brag dkar rta so dbu ma'i rdzong)

Here, we see the codification of a system joining poetic names for meditation retreats together with local toponyms. In this way, the text's biographical narrative could identify and claim new territory on its own terms, divorced from the restraints of previous geo-political boundaries while remaining connected to locations known on the ground. The geographic biography began to take shape.

Another fourteenth-century text, *The Illuminating Lamp* by G.yung ston Zhi byed ri pa (mid-fourteenth century) continued the process of systematizing groups of retreat sites, identifying a slightly different category of meditation caves.[39] This text refers to another set of six caves known as "the six lotus fortresses" (*padma rdzong drug*):[40]

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[39] Zhi byed ri pa, NDO. This text called *The Illuminating Lamp of Sun and Moon Beams*, completed in 1373, appears to have formed something of a landmark in the development of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition prior to Gtsang smyon's standard version. Its author, one G.yung ston Zhi byed ri pa, clearly draws upon earlier versions of the life story; he was famed for having seen 127 different versions. In this work, he has produced a composite survey of the entire biographical tradition, incorporating biographical narrative, historical analysis, chronological clarifications, literary criticism, question and answer records, an assessment of existing oral traditions, documentation of transmission lines, all mixed together with a good deal of autobiographical reflection. The text forms what in modern parlance might be called a "state of the field" survey of Mi la ras pa studies in the late fourteenth century. In the introduction of his English translation of *The Life of Milarepa*, Lhalungpa refers to Zhi byed ri pa as a contemporary of Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1377–1451). He also notes, in agreement with Chos kyi dbang phyug, that Si tu Paṇ chen's autobiography refers to a manuscript version of the *Illuminating Lamp* preserved at Chu bar monastery. See Lhalungpa (1977, xxx). I am currently in the process of preparing a study of this text and its author.

[40] Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 22. This passage records what appears to be the earliest mention of the name Stag phug seng ge rdzong (Tiger Cave Lion Fortress).

1. Celestial Cave of Rgya brag (Rgya brag nam mkha' rdzong)
2. Hidden Cave Demoness Fortress (Sbas phug ma mo rdzong)
3. Tiger Cave Lion Fortress (Stag phug seng ge rdzong)
4. Lotus Fortress of La phug (La phug padma rdzong)
5. Adamantine Fortress of Khro rgyal (Khro rgyal rdo rje rdzong)
6. Nāga Fortress of Glang sgo (Glang sgo klu'i rdzong)

These six sites, all located around the Dpal khud Lake in Spo rong, were named the "lotus fortresses," Zhi byed ri pa informs us, because they were previously blessed by Padmasambhava — the "Lotus Born" — a point to which we shall return in the next section.[41]

Fifteenth-century historian Tshe dbang rgyal further synthesized these traditions in his important historical work *A Religious History of Lho Rong* (*Lho rong chos 'byung*), completed in 1451, establishing a paradigm that would find its way into the standard biography several decades later. In his description of Mi la ras pa's life, the author enumerates "eighteen well-known great fortresses" (*yongs su grags pa'i rdzong chen bco brgyad*), divided into three groups of six: (1) Mi la's six fortresses (*mi la'i rdzong drug*), (2) the six fortresses of Sku thang (*sku thang rdzong drug*), and (3) the six heroine fortresses (*dpa' mo rdzong drug*), with the addition of two smaller fortresses (*rdzong chung gnyis*).[42] The first among these is a variation of the six fortresses recorded in the larger compendia, noted previously; the second seems to refer to locations in the Sku thang region of northern Nepal; the last division repeats Zhi byed ri pa's list under a different name. He also includes two small

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[41] The great lake is located in the plain called Dpal mo dpal thang that figures prominently in the life story. The lake's traditional Tibetan name is Lha mtsho srin mtsho.

[42] Tshe dbang rgyal, LRC, 102. The *mi la'i rdzong drug* include: (1) Brag dmar li nga rdzong; (2) Rta so dbu ma rdzong; (3) Brag dkar spos mtho rdzong; (4) Rgyang 'phan nam mkha' rdzong; (5) Rag ma byang chub rdzong; (6) Smin khyug grib ma rdzong. The *sku thang rdzong drug* include: (1) Brag skya rdo rje rdzong; (2) Khra tshang srin po rdzong; (3) Skyid sa nyi ma rdzong; (4) Khu byug dbyen pa rdzong; (5) Shel phug nam mkha' rdzong; (6) Rtsig pa rkang mthil rdzong. The *dpa' mo rdzong drug* include: (1) Rgya brag nam mkha' rdzong; (2) Sbas phug ma mo rdzong; (3) La phug padma rdzong; (4) Khro rgyal rdo rje rdzong; (5) Glang mgo klu bdud rdzong. The sixth cave of this last group, which should be Stag phug seng ge rdzong, is strangely absent from the list. The *rdzong chung gnyis* include (1) Brag dmar spos mthon nam mkha' rdzong; and (2) Skyid phug nyi ma rdzong.

fortresses (*rdzong chung gnyis*) and several miscellaneous locations including Ti se (Kailāsa), Rtsib ri, and Spa gro stag tshang.

If these early versions of the life story display a significant degree of flexibility and gradual refinement in the mapping of Mi la ras pa's activities, Gtsang smyon Heruka imported wholesale much of this topography into his version of the *Life* and *Songs*, completed in 1488, where he then re-formulated the best-known structure of Mi la ras pa's geographical biography. Clearly drawing on the works of Rgyal thang pa and Tshe dbang rgyal as models, the *Life*'s eleventh chapter presents a brief synopsis of the entire body of narratives recorded in the *Songs*, including a comprehensive catalogue of retreat locations. Through Mi la's voice, Gtsang smyon enumerates eighteen cave locations as in the *Religious History of Lho rong*, but he employs a more standardized Tibetan typology that would shape Mi la ras pa's geographical biography into a form more immediately recognizable to his Tibetan audience, and one fitting an already standardized interpretive system. This new classification of so-called "well-known outer fortresses," (*yongs su grags pa phyi'i rdzong*) "unknown inner fortresses," (*ma grags pa nang gi rdzong*) and "secret fortresses" (*gsang ba'i rdzong*) echoes the categories frequently found in Tibetan life writing: outer (*phyi ba*), inner (*nang ba*), and secret (*gsang ba*) biographies, which might respectively describe the subject's mundane affairs, his or her spiritual career, and finally a record of visions and inner yogic experiences.[43]

As with previous models, Gtsang smyon Heruka's framework grouped together sites located in a single geographic area: Skyid grong, Rong shar, and Lake Dpal khud, respectively.[44] (Refer to Maps 2–5.) The last of these simply copies the lists of Zhi byed ri pa and Tshe dbang rgyal

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[43] Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor similarly describes the three groups of retreat sites using this system when recording his travels through the region in 1789. See Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, GZN, 501.

[44] The correspondence of each group of six fortresses to these three geographic regions is not explicitly noted in the text. Maps 2–5 are based largely upon site surveys conducted between 1996–2007. In several instances (Brag skya rdo rje rdzong, Skyang phan nam mkha' rdzong), these data have been augmented by information provided by local informants. Three of the "unknown" sites (Be rtse 'dod yon rdzong, Rtsig pa rkang mthil rdzong, Khu byug dben pa rdzong) have been provisionally mapped based upon descriptions in Bstan 'dzin Chos kyi blo gros, LNY.

under yet another name to fit within his known/unknown/secret scheme. Gtsang smyon additionally lists four well-known large caves (*yongs su grags paʾi phug chen bzhi*), and four unknown caves (*ma grags paʾi bzhi*).

Altogether, some twenty-eight caves are enumerated under this scheme, not including several other important sites, constituting, in Mi la's words, "all of the sacred places I have ever stayed."[45] And much as he did for the text of the biography, Gtsang smyon Heruka, editor of the yogin's best-known biography, has Mi la ras pa empower the places associated with his life story, thus completing the landscaping process. The yogin states, "If you meditate in these places, favorable conditions will gather in your solitude. Since they have been infused with the blessings of my lineage, go and meditate [in them]."[46] The geographic biography here takes its most clearly articulated form, consecrated and authorized by the subject himself.

Landscaping the Map

As Gtsang smyon Heruka standardized Mi la ras pa's biographical tradi-tion, he not only re-mapped the geography of the yogin's life, but also re-arranged its terrain to fit his new biographical model. Thus, in addi-tion to describing the lay of the land, the notion of "landscape" here retains its verbal sense of arranging geographic elements to intentionally form a particular setting. If "landscape refers to the shape — the mate-rial topography — of a piece of land," it also refers to its shaping (Cress-well 2004:11). Gtsang smyon may thus be understood as actively landscaping the environment, serving as an architect not only of liter-ary narrative but also of biographical space. This process began, in part, with the renaming and categorizing of sites in the local terrain; once identified, Gtsang smyon further incorporated them into the biograph-ical tradition through the use of prophetic narrative.

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[45] For the list of these sites, see de Jong (1959:156.13); Lhalungpa (1977:146 ff.).
[46] de Jong (1959:157). Cf. Lhalungpa (1977:147). *de rnams su sgom pa byung na dben la mthun rkyen ʾdzom pa yang yod cing/ brgyud paʾi byin rlabs ʾjug pa yin pas sgoms shig gsungs pas/.*
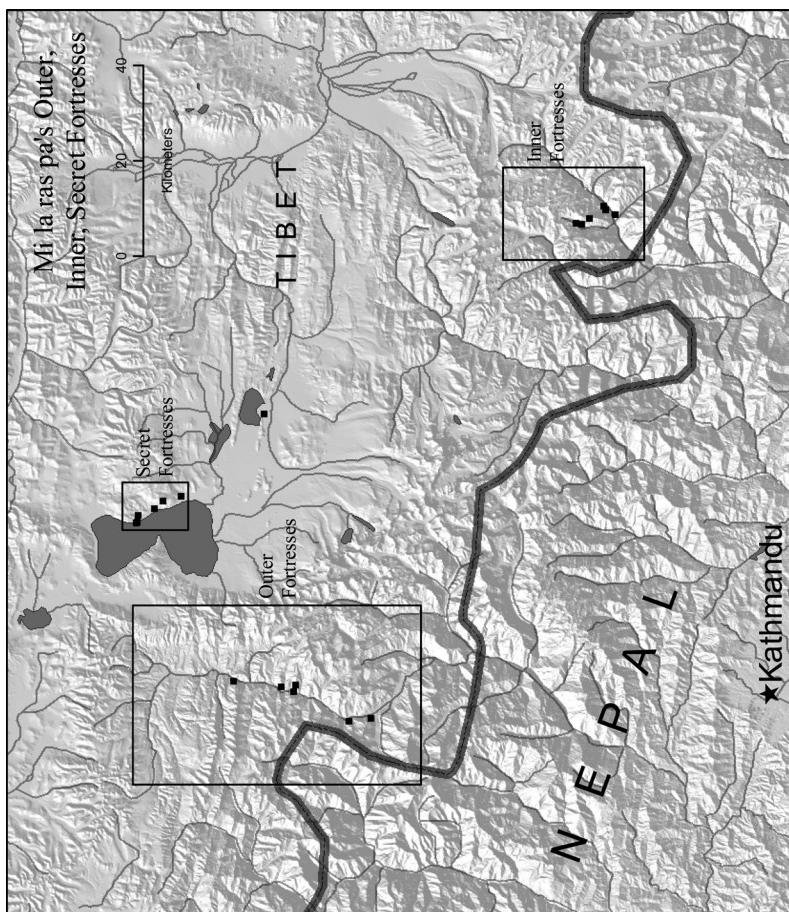
Map 2: Mi la ras pa's Outer, Inner, and Secret Fortresses.
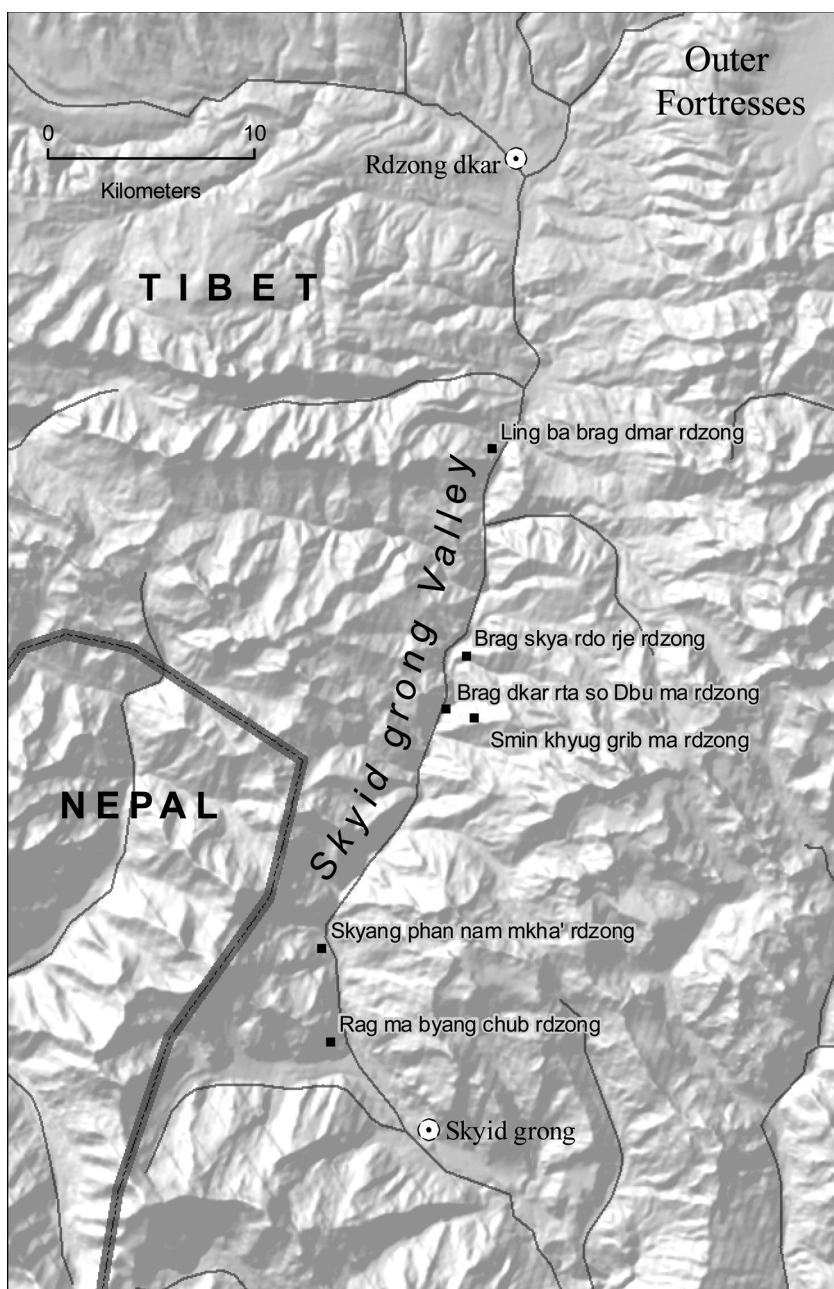
Map 3: Mi la ras pa's Outer Fortresses.
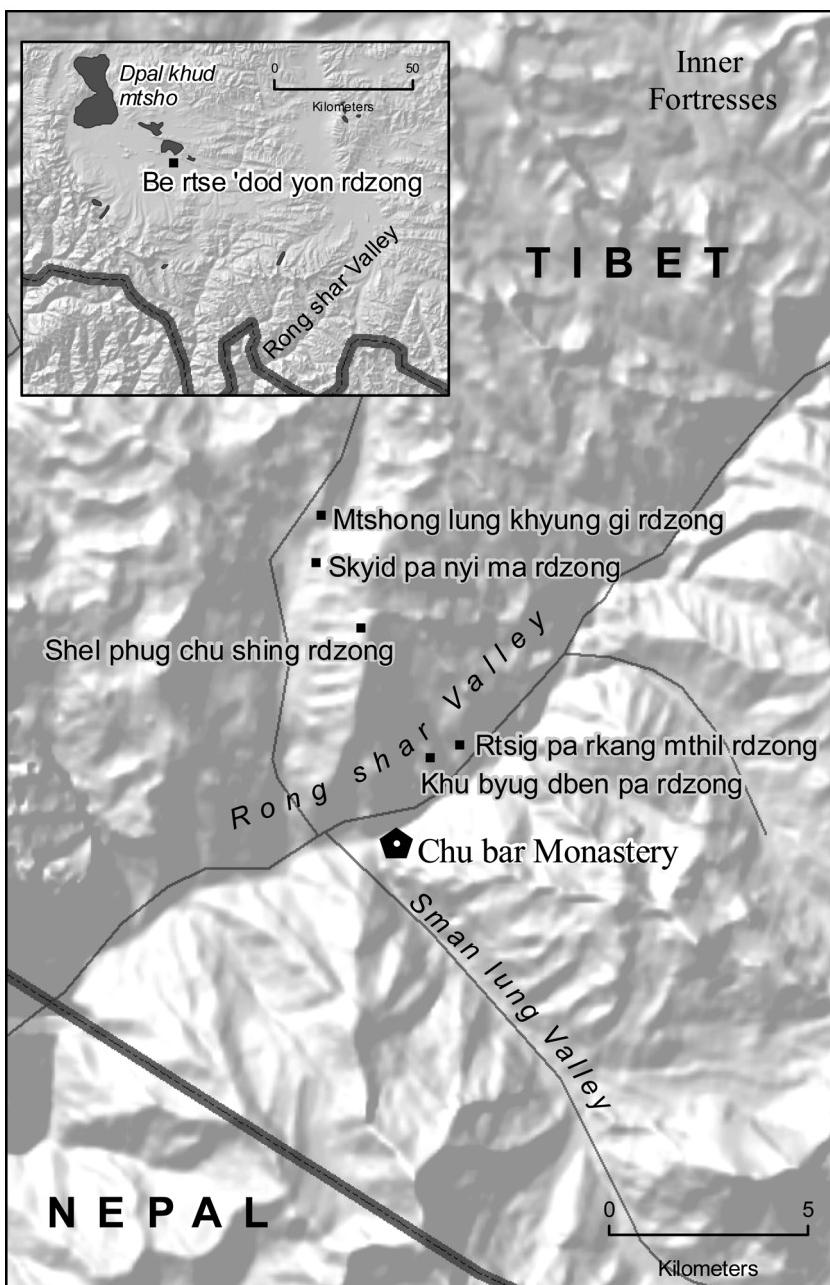
Map 4: Mi la ras pa's Inner Fortresses.
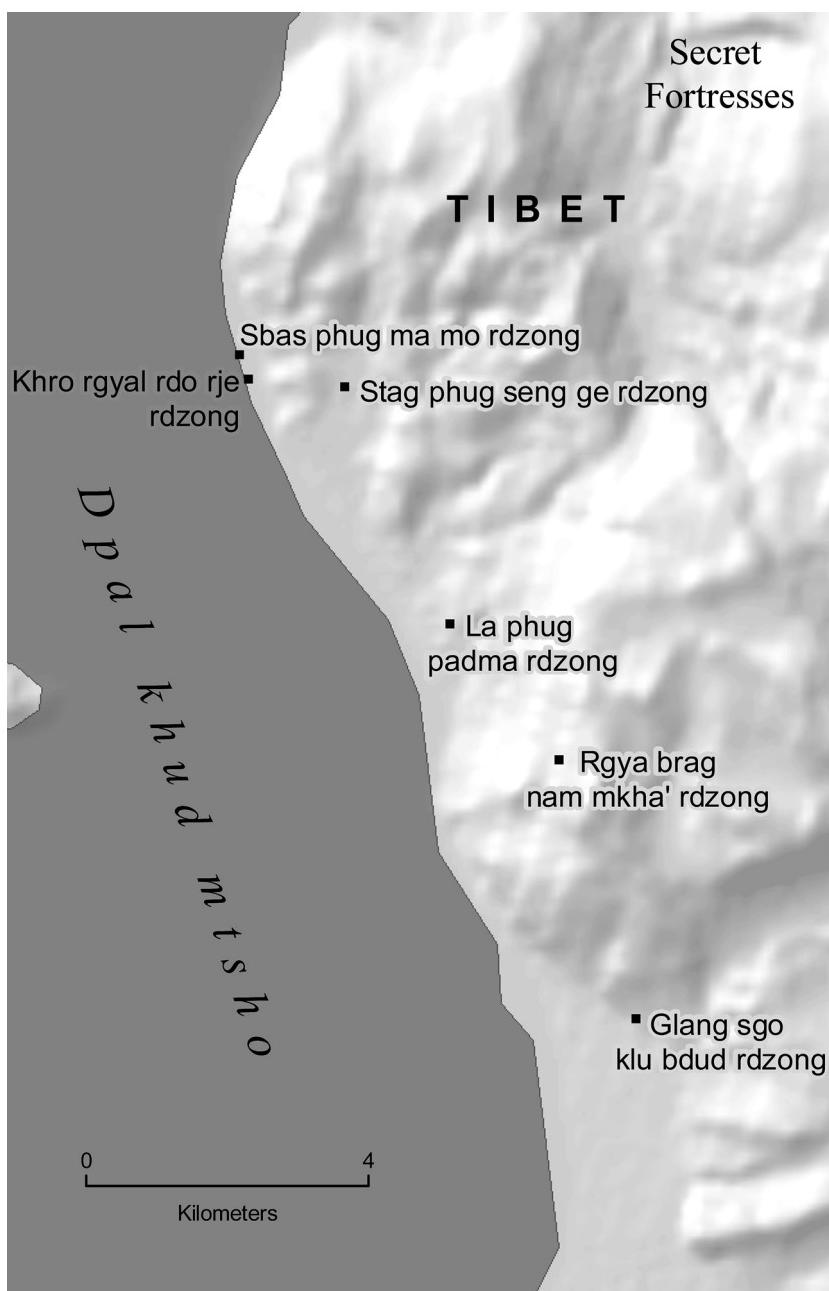
Map 5: Mi la ras pa's Secret Fortresses.

As noted previously, the earliest biographical works record few locations by name. The subsequent compendia delineate a host of new places within the comprehensive cycles of their Collected Songs. It is Gtsang smyon Heruka, however, who most effectively — and systematically — landscapes the terrain. For the first time, retreat caves and hermitages with evocative names such as Cheerful Sun Fortress (Skyid pa nyi ma rdzong) and Crystal Cave Bamboo Fortress (Shel phug chu shing rdzong) were re-grouped, and in some cases perhaps re-named, to form a unique and recognizable geography within Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition. This new topography paralleled a literary classification familiar to Tibetan readers, and would endure as the canonical map of the yogin's life.

Naming is often asserted to be an expression of power, in Yi-fü Tuan's words, "[a] creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible" (Tuan 1991:688). Naming also serves as an expression of dominion over place, a process already visible in the early work of Rgyal thang pa. Here, Gtsang smyon Heruka's steady landscaping through naming and classification illustrates the production of place even as it lays claim to the places of Mi la ras pa's life. In Gtsang smyon's hands, the *Life* and *Songs* carved out a newly defined Buddhist terrain across southern Tibet, a terrain that would later serve to again re-imagine and re-map Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition, as will be discussed below.

The increasingly central use of the term "fortress" (*rdzong*) is revealing, indicating not only the delineation of space, but also its fortification. The fortification of sacred space in Mi la ras pa's biography began early on, and was subsequently expanded in the biographical compendia and in historical materials. Here the term began to serve as a metaphor for a place conducive to steady meditation — a mental fortification. In Gtsang smyon Heruka's formulation, the fortress provided a new framework for conceptualizing categories of sacred space. The later tradition then applied new layers of meaning to each of these categories, creating a new key for reading and interpreting the map of Mi la ras pa's life. In his history of Brag dkar rta so's retreat complex, itself founded upon several of the yogin's meditation sites, Chos kyi dbang phyug provides such a key by defining these three categories, with the addition of a fourth:

The name fortress (*rdzong*) is applied to practice places that are outer, inner, secret, and further fortresses. To use the example of a worldly king's fortress-castle, extremely sturdy so that an opposing enemy army could not damage it: an *outer fortress* (*phyi'i rdzong*) is called a fortress because it is a fortification of renunciation and revulsion, keeping at bay the countless activities of the saṃsāric world that appear in this life, and because the commotion and distraction of the eight worldly affairs are unable to assail the castle-master. An *inner fortress* (*nang gi rdzong*) is called a fortress because it is a fortification that generates the Vajrayāna path, a fortress that, by means of deep *samādhi*, an army of conceptuality — the three poisons, the five poisons, and so forth — is unable to trample. A *secret fortress* (*gsang ba'i rdzong*) is called a fortress because it is a fortification of the perfectly pure life force, the *dharmakāya* of bliss-emptiness coemergent wisdom, the view free from all fabrications that is unblemished by the enemy of grasping at the mental constructs of perceiver and perceived. A *further fortress* (*yang rdzong*) is given the name further fortress because, until the qualities of such experience and realization are perfected, it is necessary for their unabated river-like continuity, nurturing their increase, and for the attainment of steadfastness in them.[47]

Designated as fortresses, these meditation sites became places of refuge, impenetrable by "the countless activities of the saṃsāric world," and impervious to an "army of conceptuality." If not quite interior castles, they serve as strongholds to support and protect the renunciate meditator following in Mi la ras pa's footsteps. They also became identifiable

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[47] Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 4b. *de yang brag dkar rta so dbu ma rdzong/ zhes pa'i gnas kyi mtshan sgra bshad du smra na/ gnas 'di'i 'og gi sked pa nas brag dkar po dar dkar gyi yol ba rkyang pa lta bu zam ma chad pas dkris pa ltar yod pas brag dkar dang/ sgrub phug gi steng ngos brag dkar po rta yi so ltar rtsigs pa yod pas rta so dang/ rje btsun chen po nyid kyi rtsa bu ma'i mdud pa grol bas na dbu ma dang/ sgrub gnas phyi nang gsang ba yang rdzong dang bcas par rdzong zhes 'dogs par mdzad pa ni/ dper mtshon na/ 'jigs rten rgyal po'i mkhar rdzong shin du gtsan pa zhig la phar rol dgra sde'i dmag dpungs gis 'tshe par mi nus pa bzhin 'dir yang phyi'i rdzong ni/ tshe 'di snang 'jigs rten 'khor ba'i bya bzhag mtha' dag rgyangs sring zhing nges 'byung zhen log gi rdzong brtsan por dgra chos brgyad la songs pa 'du 'dzi rnam dbyengs <g.yeng> gi dpung gis llags lta bar mi nus pas na rdzong zhes dang/ nang gi rdzong ni rdo rje theg [6a] pa'i lam gyi bskyed rdzong zab mo'i ting nge 'dzin gyis rdzong la dgra dug gsum dug lnga la sogs pa rnam par rtog pa'i dpung gis rdzi bar mi nus pas rdzong zhes dang/ gsang ba'i rdzong ni/ bde stong lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes de kho na nyid chos sku spros pa thams cad dang bral ba lta ba rnam par dag pa'i srog rdzong la dgra ma rig bzung 'dzin blos byas zhen 'dzin gyi <gyis> ma gos pa'i phyir rdzong zhes dang/ yang rdzong ni/ de lta bu'i nyams rtogs yon tan thar phyin pa'i bar du chu bo'i rgyun bzhin mi chad cing gong 'phel du skyongs ba dang brtan pa thob dgos pa'i phyir yang rdzong gi tha snyad du 'jog pa'o/.*

structures, bastions for holders of the yogin's lineage; indeed some locations, such as Brag dkar rta so and Chu bar, did eventually become influential monastic institutions, serving as important outposts of Bka' brgyud religious and political influence.[48] In this context however — as with Padmasambhava's hidden lands — the natural environment, and the yogin's activities in it, have been claimed, ordered, and fortified without laying a single brick.

Having landscaped the terrain of Mi la ras pa's life story, Gtsang smyon authenticates his new sites and empowers them by incorporating their names into the biography through prophetic narrative. In his standard version of the *Life*, Mi la receives this final advice from his guru Mar pa before departing for his homeland:

> Take refuge in the solitude of the barren mountains, the snows, and the forests. In the solitude the mountains there is Rgyal gyi Śrī of La stod, which has been blessed by the great adepts of India. Go there and meditate. There is Gangs Ti se [Mt. Kailāsa], which the Buddha spoke of as Himālaya (Ri bo gangs can) and which is the palace of the chosen deity Cakrasaṃvara. Go there and meditate. There is La phyi gangs ra, which is Godāvarī, one of the twenty-four sacred lands. Go there and meditate. There are Ri bo dpal 'bar of Mang yul and Yol mo gangs ra, the sacred sites prophesized in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Go there and meditate. There is Chu bar of Brin, dwelling place of the ḍākinīs who protect the region. Go there and meditate.[49]

Of particular interest is the identification of Kailāsa and La phyi with two of twenty-four sacred lands (T. *yul*, S. *pīṭha*) named in the literature of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* as geographic locations efficacious for Buddhist practice. Already by the time of the 'Bri gung master 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), Bka' brgyud followers had established popular pilgrimage traditions to the three great sacred mountains at Kailāsa, La phyi, and Tsā ri, identifying them with Himālaya/Himavat, Godāvarī,

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[48] The Chu bar monastery and retreat center began as a 'Bri gung institution that eventually passed through the stewardship of the sixth Zhwa dmar pa who likewise offered it to the tenth Karma pa. It was subsequently converted to a Dge lugs center under the fifth Dalai Lama. For a brief history and catalogue of its contents, see Bstan 'dzin Chos kyi blo gros, LNY, 35ff. A detailed history of the Brag dkar rta so complex, including a record of its abbatial lineage, is recorded in Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL.

[49] Adapted from Lhalungpa (1977:94). Cf. de Jong (1959:102–3).

and Cāritra/Devīkoṭa from the list of twenty-four sites, as well as with Cakrasaṃvara's body, speech, and mind.[50] Here, Gtsang smyon was aligning the life story with a tradition of sacred geography already several centuries old and firmly controlled by adherents of Mi la ras pa's Bka' brgyud tradition. He incorporates locations such as Rgyal gyi Śrī (contemporary Rtsib ri) prominent in the early biographical tradition. And as we shall see in the following section, the remaining sites (Ri bo dpal 'bar, Yol mo, and Chu bar) were formerly associated with another central figure in Tibet's religious history: Padmasambhava.[51]

In this passage, Gtsang smyon Heruka adds one final location, recorded in the life story for the first time: the border region of southern Tibet known as Tsā ri. In the centuries following Mi la ras pa's death, Tsā ri became an important pilgrimage location and retreat site, especially associated with followers of the yogin's Bka' brgyud lineage. Gtsang smyon himself is said to have spent three years in its vast wilderness tracts during which time he began to display the erratic behavior for which he was named (Madman of Gtsang). No record exists, however, that Mi la ras pa visited Tsā ri. It is therefore perhaps with a touch of self-reflective humor that Gtsang smyon adds this final note to the geography of Mi la ras pa's life, in the form of a prophecy delivered by the yogin's master Mar pa the Translator:

> In the east lies the great sacred sites of Devīkoṭa and Tsā ri which are interconnected. It is not, at present, the time to open them. In the future your spiritual descendants will establish themselves there.[52]

The spiritual descendants no doubt refer, among others, to Gtsang smyon Heruka himself.

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[50] See Huber (1990, 1997); MacDonald (1990).

[51] It is also worth noting the Gtsang smyon Heruka himself was sent by his guru Sha ra rab 'byams pa to travel to La phyi, Chu bar, and Kailāsa, as well as Mi la ras pa's six fortresses. See Rgod tshang ras pa, TNG, 25. In this way, he was also realigning Mi la ras pa's life story with the places central to his own early training.

[52] de Jong (1959:103); Lhalungpa (1977:94). *shar phyogs na gnas chen de wi ko ṭa dang/ tsa ri 'brel nas yod de/ de da lta zhal byed ma ran/ ma 'ongs pa na khyod kyi bu rgyud kyis 'dzin pa zhig 'ong ba yin/.*

Contested Place: Mi la ras pa's Life on Hallowed Ground

Having broadly examined the maps of Mi la ras pa's life and their land-scaping by his biographers, we turn now to a specific mode of transformation in text and terrain taking the form of what might be called "contested place." Social geographer Doreen Massey has noted that places "do not have single, unique 'identities,'" but are rather described as "full of internal conflicts" (Massey 1994:155). Indeed, one needs only to look at recent events in Jerusalem or India's Babri Mosque in Ayodhya to understand that a place is frequently defined through conflict, "conflict over what its past has been (the nature of its 'heritage'), conflict over what should be its present development, conflict over what should be its future" (ibid.). In the following discussion, however, the word *contested* may be too strong a term, since the process at work here refers to voices less in conflict than in conversation. The phenomenon of sacred sites established upon previously consecrated ground has been well documented in other contexts, and, indeed, sifting through the strata of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition we find that many of his sites were originally visited and blessed by the Indian *siddha* extraordinaire, Padmasambhava. How, then, does the phenomenon of contested space manifest in the context of Tibetan life writing? What are its forms, its effects?

As noted above, Padmasambhava's subjugation of local spirits inimical to Buddhism is a theme ubiquitous throughout his life stories, where he is credited with taming the fertile, if yet uncivilized, Tibetan soil. The acclaimed treasure revealer Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer (1136–1204), writing in his twelfth-century religious history *Honey from the Center of the Flower (Chos ʾbyung me tog snying po sbrang rtsiʾi bcud)*, notes the following account of Padmasambhava's journey through the Tibetan borderland, describing his vanquishing of the hostile forces: "[Padmasambhava]... subjugated Bkra shis tshe ring ma (Lady of Auspicious Long Life), demoness of the border regions Brin and Chu dbar, and then bound her under oath."[53] Biographical accounts of Tibetan figures such as Padmasambhava and Mi la ras pa frequently describe episodes in which the non-human forces hostile to Buddhism are subjugated

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[53] Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer, CMN, 278. *brin chu dbar gyi so mtshams kyi lha srin bkra shis tshe ring ma btul nas dam la btags te ... /.*

and forced to swear their allegiance to the dharma under penalty of death and to protect those who follow its teachings. This brief episode is just one among dozens underlying the origin myths of Buddhism in Tibet that continue to serve as powerful sites of historical and religious legitmiation.

Interestingly, however, this event occurred in the region that would later serve as Mi la ras pa's heartland: repository of his numerous retreat caves, home to his many patrons, and the site of his death and cremation. And four of Mi la's earliest biographical narratives — the quartet of song cycles individually signed by Ngan rdzong ras pa, himself a close predecessor of Nyang ral — describe a similar meeting of Mi la ras pa and the same demoness, this time with Bkra shis tshe ring ma manifesting as five sisters, the Tshe ring mched lnga (Five Long Life Sisters), and identified not as demonic but ḍākinīs, tantric goddesses. Having first attempted to harm the yogin, the sisters repent their deeds and, in the third chapter, state their qualifications for receiving instructions thus:

> When the *ācārya* Padmasambhava came to Tibet, we went to meet him in Kha la rong sgo intending to cause him harm, but we were overcome by the splendor of his mighty gestures and were compelled to become his followers. We straightforwardly offered him the core of our being. At that time we also received many teachings of the *sūtra* class on cause and effect.[54]

The sisters, of course, go on to become Mi la ras pa's steadfast devotees, the chief among them serving as his consort in sexual yoga. These two passages raise questions of source material and literary chronology beyond the scope of this study. Yet they also clearly illustrate the instability of local space (whose dominion shifts from Padmasambhava to Mi la) even as the various strata of its religious affiliation are maintained through biographical memory. Justification for why a local spirit and its geographic abode require re-subjugation some three centuries later is found in another episode from Mi la ras pa's life.

During the yogin's stay at the site called Red Rock Fortress of Ling nga (Ling nga brag dmar rdzong) near Skyid grong, a demoness living

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[54] The earliest form of this passage is found in the *Bu chen bcu gnyis* (BCN, 181a.5), and was preserved in nearly identical form by Gtsang smyon Heruka. See Gtsang smyon Heruka, NG, 503; Chang (1962:343).

in the rocky cave once again assails him. Eventually, she is moved to describe her dreadful situation in song, here referring to Padmasambhava by his secret name Thod phreng rtsal:

> I am a follower of Thod phreng's lineage.
> I've listened to a string of authentic dharma words.
> I've heard the words but have great craving.
> ……………………………
> My mind is kind hearted and my outlook pure, yet
> My ugly body feels great hunger for nourishment.
> Through evil karma, I roam the earth's settlements
> Hungry for food in flesh and blood form.
> I enter the mind of whomever I meet.
> I incite the hearts of fair maidens.
> I infect fine men with desire.
> …………………………
> For a home I dwell in Ling ba'i brag.
> These are my types of activity.[55]

In response, Mi la ras pa renews her vows of refuge and *bodhicitta*, sealed with a promise to aid future meditators. The demoness, and by extension the landscape itself, describes its own volatility: once converted but now relapsed through the power of karmic compulsion, like a novice unaccustomed to celibate life. She remains a follower of Padmasambhava's lineage, but has gone astray. And some three hundred years later, as new lord of this domain, Mi la ras pa is charged with refurbishing the land, converting it anew, even as he gains authority from the powerful traces of its previous occupant and master.

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[55] This episode is recorded in the *Bu chen bcu gnyis* (BCN, 52a.4) and in nearly identical form in Gtsang smyon's standard version. See Gtsang smyon Heruka, NG, 234; Chang (1962:45). */nga padma thod phreng rgyud <brgyud> pa ʾdzin/ /dam chos tshig gi phreng ba nyan/ /tshig thos pa yod kyang zhen pa che/ /nga rnal ʾbyor yongs kyi tshogs khang ʾgrim/ /las ʾphro can rnams dge la ʾgod/ /skal ba can rnams don dang sprod/ /sems bzang snang ba dkar lags kyang/ /lus ngan ma sos ltogs tshor che/ /las ngan ʾdzam gling grong khyer myul/ /zas su sha dang khrag la dgaʾ/ /mi tsam po yongs kyi sems la ʾjug/ /sman mchor mo kun la snying rlung slong/ /pho mchor po kun la mtshal ris btab/ /mig gis kun la ltad mo bltas/ /sems kyis rgyal khams zhe la mnan/ /lus kyis kun la g.yeng ʾdegs byas/ /gnas ni ling paʾi brag la gnas/ /de tsho nga yi spyod ʾgros yin/.*

The stratification of sacred space in Mi la's biographical tradition is perhaps most powerfully illustrated by the yogin's famed hermitage of Brag dkar rta so. Accounts of Padmasambhava's life describe his journey north from Nepal through the Tibetan borderlands of the Skyid grong and Mang yul valleys; his three months in the region, according to Chos kyi dbang phyug's history, included a stay at Brag dkar rta so itself. The spot was therefore already established as a sacred site by the time Mi la returned home to begin his yogic career when he sang, "I go now to meditate at White-rock Horse-tooth." It was Padmasambhava's consecrated ground that drew him there for the first time.[56]

At this early stage in Mi la ras pa's life he is, in Chos kyi dbang phyug's terms, an "individual blessed by a sacred site." The story of his life is thus defined through yogic practice at a place sanctified by former masters, until the location transferred its principal affiliation to Mi la ras pa himself, thereby transforming into a "sacred site blessed by a (new) individual." And in Chos kyi dbang phyug's estimation, this same process occurred at many of the yogin's most famous retreats. He writes: "The places directly prophesied by Mar pa the Translator to Lord Mi la — Rtsa ri, Lho brag, Rgyal gyi shri, La phyi and Chu dbar, Dpal 'bar, Yol mo gangs ra, and so forth — were all previously renowned as Guru [Padmasambhava's] practice places."[57]

Each one of these locations, with the exception of Tsā ri as noted above, then shifts during the course of Mi la's life (and the writing of his biographies) as he renews the vows of local spirits and re-consecrates their terrain. Chos kyi dbang phyug describes this pattern, beginning with the Tshe ring ma sisters: "It is also taught in the responses to questions how the five long life sisters met the *ācārya* [Padmasambhava] when he went to Kha la rong sgo, and were bound under oath."[58] He then continues to describe many of Mi la's major retreat sites:

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[56] Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 8a. This line is appended to the end of each verse of Mi la's famed song of essenselessness (*snying po med pa'i mgur*), found or referred to in most early versions of the *rnam thar*. Gtsang smyon Heruka, however, was the first to specifically associate the song with Brag dkar rta so by name.

[57] Ibid. 9a. To this list we might add the six "secret fortresses" that, according to Zhi byed ri pa, were likewise originally blessed by Padmasambhava. *rje mi lar sgra sgyur mar pas/ rtsa ri/ lho brag/ rgyal gyi shri/ la phyi chu dbar/ dpal 'bar/ yol mo gangs ra sogs dngos su lung bstan pa de kun gu ru'i grub gnas su sngon nas grags zin pa... /.*

[58] Ibid. 9b. *tshe ring mched lngas kha la rong sgor slob dpon byon dus bsus shing dam la btags pa'i tshul zhus lan du gsung pa bzhin dang/.*

Likewise, for the local lord (*gnas bdag*) of Yol mo, the local protector (*gnas srung*) of Dpal ʾbar, the *lha btsan* deities of Gangs Ti se, and so forth: the *Mahācārya* [Padmasambhava] bound them under oath. Then later on, they once again restored their oaths and vows of *bodhicitta* before Rje btsun [Mi la ras pa] himself, and having done so they were ordered to support the practice lineage.[59]

Chos kyi dbang phyug likely had motives for emphasizing these two layers, forming a dialogue of sorts between the lives of founding figures esteemed by followers in both Rnying ma and Bkaʾ brgyud traditions. Further research on the life of this important early-modern scholar may clarify this point. But these stories illustrate ways in which the ground has been consecrated and re-consecrated, transferring its religious affiliation while retaining the memory of its earlier biographical strata.

In the account from Mi la ras paʾs encounter at Ling nga brag cited above, the yogin's assailant is described as a *brag srin mo*, the *srin mo* forming a class of indigenous and particularly fearsome female entities; a *brag srin mo* is such a being inhabiting rocky places (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:280). As a *srin mo*, she is of the same "race" as the great supine demoness famously subdued by the Tibetan king, effectively taming the whole of the Tibetan landscape. And like her namesake, Mi la's attacker was not killed off during her initial encounter with Padmasambhava but was allowed to live on newly converted, in order to promote and protect the Buddhist teachings (see Gyatso 1989:42). It is in part through her continued presence, and through the presence of so many non-human spirits first tamed by Padmasambhava only to reappear in the stories of Mi la's life, that allow the yogin to reaffirm his presence — and his dominion — over the land.

Like the more prosaic soil, sacred space could be viewed as forming layers, independent strata preserving discrete narrative traditions from the lives of different masters. It is here that Casey's notion of place as a "container of experiences" seems particularly apt. In some cases these layers might be isolated from one another, separated by centuries of accretion. In others, such as those examined here, they might seem to converge through the literary activities of biographers and historians. The acclaimed master Kaḥ thog Rig ʾdzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1775)

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[59] Ibid. 9b. *yol moʾi gnas bdag/ dpal ʾbar gyi gnas srung/ gangs ti seʾi lha btsan sogs slob dpon chen pos dam la btags zin rjes slar yang rje btsun nyid kyi drung du dam tshig dang sems bskyed gsos te sgrub brgyud skyongs bar bkaʾ bsgos pas…/.*

summarized the relationship formed between these layers and illustrates their shifting nature in his song of praise to Mi la ras pa's premier retreat site Brag dkar rta so (*gnas bstod kyi mgur*), where he writes:

> Formerly, it was blessed by Guru [Padmasambhava].
> Later on, unrivaled Lord Mi la,
> Became pleased in this place,
> The great vajra ground of intrinsic reality.
> Therefore, understand the second Vajrāsana as inhabiting this site.[60]

The ground has shifted once again, but is here elevated to a level transcending the purely local. Based upon its multiple levels of biographical correspondence, the abode first of Padmasambhava and then Mi la ras pa now equals the site of the Buddha's enlightenment itself: Bodhgayā, Vajrāsana, the adamantine ground. The unstable landscape has, in the end, become immutable.

Re-Imagined Place: New Geographies of Praxis

If Gtsang smyon Heruka produced what would become Tibet's most widely recognized map of Mi la ras pa's life, he was not the only author to survey the land or to interpret it in new ways. As noted above, Rgyal thang pa described the yogin's life in largely geo-political terms, delimiting the boundaries of a Buddhist terrain aligned with the religious tradition of his followers. Biographers also re-imagined the places of Mi la ras pa's life story by superimposing new life-maps upon the known landscape, specifically charting the progress of his personal yogic practice. As we shall see below, the land itself could thus be read as a biographical text, narrating the yogin's progression through the four stages of Mahāmudrā meditation or the tantric purification of the five wheels (*cakras*) along the central channel from the base of his spine to the crown of his head. Although they do not appear in any of the larger biographical compendia, including the standard version itself, each of these re-imagined maps implicitly supports the notion of Mi la's libera-

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[60] Quoted ibid. 8a. *sngon tshe ni gu rus byin gyis brlabs// bar du ni 'gran bral mi la rjes // yang dag don rdo rje'i sa chen po// gnas 'di ru mnyes par gyur pas na// rdo rje gdan gnyis pa gnas 'dir khums//.*

tion in one lifetime and a single body, a trope that became a central motif in Gtsang smyon's work and a defining feature of the life story.

Indian Buddhist tantras and their commentarial literature describe elaborate systems of tantric geography referring both to locations in the external world and to sites within the yogin's own subtle body.[61] The *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, for example, famously lists twenty-four such sacred sites, many of which were re-mapped onto the Tibetan landscape as translators carried such works back to their homeland and transmitted them among their followers.[62] The Tibetan landscape was likewise imagined as literally embodying tantric deities, as was the case for the regions of Spo bo and Padma bkod in southern Tibet, home to some of Tibet's most acclaimed hidden lands (*sbas yul*). Different traditions of revealed literature variously describe these regions as surveying points on the body of the tantric deity Vajravārāhī, or as mapping the deity's subtle physiology by associating its five channel wheels with specific sites on the ground.[63]

Authors in Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition, too, developed new systems for mapping the life story, specifically emphasizing the yogin's practice of tantric yoga and the development of his subtle yogic body. Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje (1309–1364), in his mid-fourteenth-century religious history *The Red Annals* (*Deb gter dmar po*), provides one such re-imagined map, produced more than a century prior to Gtsang smyon's standard version. His brief sketch of Mi la ras pa's life recounts how the yogin left Mar pa for his homeland and wandered among many isolated retreats including the six fortresses, La phyi, and Chu bar. For nine years he meditated one-pointedly, undergoing intense hardship but failed to gain any experience or realization whatsoever.[64] Then, during the span of half a month, his obstacles were dispelled and he made great progress as spiritual realization blazed forth all at once. The author

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[61] See, for example, Tsuda (1978:215–131). A more general overview is provided in Ngawang Zangpo (2001:50–74). Templeman (1999) discusses this inner and outer tantric geography in terms of Indian pilgrimage traditions recorded in Tibetan biographical sources.

[62] On the Tibetan assimilation of Indian tantric sites, see Huber (1990).

[63] See Stein (1988:40–48) for examples from Tsā ri and Padma bkod. See also Ehrhard (1999a).

[64] Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje, RA, 79.

then describes Mi la's progressive attainment of the four stages of Mahāmudrā meditation called the "four yogas" (*rnal 'byor bzhi*), each in a different location:

> At 'Chong lung, during the time of the first demon horde [attack], he perfected the yoga of one-pointedness. At La phyi chu bzang, during the time of the second demon horde [attack], he perfected non-elaboration. At Chu bar, during the time of the third demon horde [attack], he perfected one taste. Then he bound under oath the five long life sisters. He fully realized the yoga of non-meditation and, by means of clairvoyance and numerous miracles, he tamed all of his human and non-human disciples.[65]

According to Kun dga' rdo rje, Mi la ras pa's progression on the path — from his entrance to the bodhisattva levels to his attainment of buddhahood — therefore begins and ends within a narrowly circumscribed geographic space.[66]

Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition also mapped the yogin's life in terms of his yogic practice and developing the subtle physiology of channels (S. *nāḍī*, T. *rtsa*), currents (S. *prāṇa*, T. *rlung*), and drops (S. *bindu*, T. *thig le*). Perhaps the most famous example is Mi la's renowned

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[65] *Ibid. 'chong lung du 'dre dmag dang po'i dus su rtse gcig gi rnal 'byor rdzogs/ la phyi chu bzang su 'dre dmag bar pa la spros bral rdzogs/ chu bar du 'dre dmag gsum pa la ro gcig rdzogs nas/ tshe rings ma spun lnga dam la thogs/ sgom med kyi rnam 'byor la mngon du phyogs shing/ mngon shes rdzu 'phrul du mas gdul bya mi dang mi ma yin pa thams cad btul/.*

[66] Many Bka' brgyud traditions describe progress on the path of Mahāmudrā meditation practice in terms of four stages of yoga, a system codified in Tibet as early as the twelfth century by Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje: one-pointedness (*rtse gcig*), non-elaboration (*spros bral*), one taste (*ro gcig*), and non-meditation (*sgom med*). Although they formed an autonomous system, Bka' brgyud exegetes mapped elaborate concordances between the four yogas and the more widely described five paths (S. *pañcamārga*, T. *lam lnga*) and ten levels (S. *daśabhūmi*, T. *sa bcu*) of the bodhisattva. See, for example, the ninth Karma pa Dbang phyug rdo rje's presentation in his *Phyag chen nges don rgya mtsho* (n.d., Rumtek ed. 123b ff.) and a similar discussion in Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal's (1512/13–1587) *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*, translated in Namgyal (1986:354 ff.). Although these concordances vary, they uniformly equate the beginning of the yoga of non-fabrication as the first bodhisattva level, the path of seeing (S. *darśanamārga*, T. *mthong lam*), the fleeting initial experience of emptiness. Likewise, the yoga of non-meditation marks the end of the path as the fully awakened state of a buddha.

meditation spot at Brag dkar rta so called the Central Channel Fortress
(Dbu ma rdzong), whose name is frequently explained in the following
way:

> To provide an etymology for the name of the sacred place called White-rock
> Horse-tooth Central Channel Fortress (brag dkar rta so dbu ma rdzong): it is
> called *white rock* (*brag dkar*) because there is a white rock in the middle of this
> site's lower part, like a drape of white silk spread out, wrapped around [the moun-
> tain] in an unbroken manner. It is called *horse tooth* (*rta so*) because there is a
> white rock, like a horse's tooth, erected in the upper part of the practice cave. It is
> called *central channel* (*dbu ma*) because the knots of the central channel of the
> great Rje btsun himself came unraveled [in this place].[67]

Several centuries later, the acclaimed Bkaʾ brgyud historian Dpaʾ bo
Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566) constructed a map of Mi laʾs yogic
practice following Kun dgaʾ rdo rjeʾs model, with some variations. At
Brag dkar rta so, he records, the yogin attained accomplishment (*siddhi*)
and then at Ling ba brag, site of Mi laʾs encounter with the demoness
discussed previously, "he drew the subtle current of fire into the lower

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[67]　Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 5b. *de yang brag dkar rta so dbu ma rdzong/ zhes paʾi
gnas kyi mtshan sgra bshad du smra na/ gnas ʾdiʾiʾog gi sked pa nas brag dkar po dar dkar
gyi yol ba rkyang pa lta bu zam ma chad pas dkris pa ltar yod pas brag dkar dang/ sgrub
phug gi steng ngos brag dkar po rta yi so ltar rtsigs pa yod pas rta so dang/ rje btsun chen po
nyid kyi rtsa bu maʾi mdud pa grol bas na dbu ma dang/*

Rdo ring Bstan ʾdzin dpal ʾbyor glosses the name *dbu ma* by noting that it describes
the cave in which the view of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, the "middle way conse-
quence" philosophy, was born in Mi laʾs mind. (Bstan ʾdzin dpal ʾbyor, GZN, 518).
Chos kyi dbang phyug acknowledges this tradition although it is an etymology with
which he — and most Bkaʾ brgyud commentators — disagree:

> Furthermore, it is, indeed, not contradictory to say the name *dbu ma* is given
> because it is the sacred place in which [Mi la] actualized an understanding of the
> profound abiding nature, the ultimate great middle way, free from all fabricated
> extremes. However, it is taught that it is called *dbu ma* because this is the place
> where the knots of the central channel (*rtsa dbu ma*) were loosened; this is certain.

> (Ibid. *yang na dbu ma zhes pa zab moʾi gnas lugs chos kyi dbyings spros paʾi mthaʾ
> thams cad dang bral baʾi mthar thug dbu ma chen poʾi dgongs pa mngon du gyur paʾi
> bsti gnas yin paʾi phyir dbu ma zhes btang kyang miʾgal mod/ ʾdir ni rtsa dbu maʾi
> mdud pa grol baʾi phyir dbu ma zhes gsung par nges so/*).

central channel due to which the miracles of the rock demoness appeared; and at Sman lung Chu bar, he loosened the knot of the throat channel wheel due to which cycles on Tshe ring ma appeared."[68]

This theme was elaborated upon by the ʾBrug pa Bkaʾ brgyud master Padma dkar po (1527–1592) several decades later in his *History of the ʾBrug pa* (*ʾBrug paʾi chos ʾbyung*), where he also describes Mi laʾs meditation at Brag dkar rta so. For nine years the yogin practices with little result until, refreshed by good food and inspired by a scroll of yogic instructions imparted by his guru, "the channel-knot at his secret place came unraveled and he achieved the first and second bodhisattva levels; then, exerting himself for about a year the channel-knot at his navel came unraveled."[69] Later, after his winter retreat in La phyi, "the channel-knot at his heart came unraveled and he attained the sixth bodhisattva level."[70] After his meeting with the sisters of long life in the region of Chu bar, and after receiving the chief among them as his yogic consort, "the enjoyment channel-wheel at his throat was filled with vital energy (*dwangs ma*) whereby he attained the realization of the eighth bodhisattva level."[71] Finally, after Ras chung pa returned from India, filled with pride about the teachings and texts he had received, Mi la displays an array of miraculous performances. At this time, just before setting off for the Nepalese outpost of Bal po rdzong, "he revealed the process in which the channel-knot at his forehead came unraveled, whereby he became a bodhisattva of the tenth level," a state, the text describes, undifferentiated from that of the Tathāgatas.[72]

These two forms of life-map differ in content, one documenting Mi laʾs progress on the path of Mahāmudrā meditation, the other, the

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[68] Gtsug lag phreng ba, KGT, 783. *ling paʾi brag tu dbu maʾi mar snar me rlung tshud baʾi rten ʾbrel brag srin moʾi cho ʾphrul snang ba dang/ sman lung chu bar du mgrin paʾi rtsa mdud zhig paʾi rten ʾbrel tshe ring maʾi skor snang/.*

[69] Pamda dkar po, DCJ, 367. *gsang gnas kyi rtsa mdud grol/ sa dang po dang gnyis pa non/ de nas lo tsam du brtson par mdzad pas lte baʾi rtsa mdud grol/.*

[70] Ibid. 368. *de dus snying kaʾi rtsa mdud grol/ sa drug pa non pa yin te/.*

[71] Ibid. 370. *deʾi dus mgrin pa longs spyod kyi ʾkhor lo dwangs mas gang bas sa brgyad kyi rtogs pa rnyed/.*

[72] Ibid. 371. *deʾi skabs su dpral baʾi rtsa mdud grol bas sa bcuʾi byang chub sems dpar gyur paʾi tshul bstan/* Chos kyi dbang phyug later copied this mapping of Mi laʾs yogic attainments, first in his history of Brag dkar rta so in 1816 and then again in his 1820 golden rosary collection of ʾBrug pa Bkaʾ brgyud biographies. See Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 19a–21b; and DKS, 24a–25b.

development of his subtle yogic physiology. Yet they equally emphasize the trope of his liberation in one life and a single body by illustrating his progression along the five paths and ten levels, from first insight to full awakening. To this end, they support the division of his life into two broad periods: first, from his early life up to the first retreats at Brag dkar rta so, and second, his mature teaching career as a realized yogic master, an *ārya* being who had passed through the path of vision and entered the bodhisattva levels.

The early extensive biographies explicitly incorporated these divisions into their narrative structure. Although they lacked the detailed praxis-oriented maps described here, they demarcated an early period prior to yogic attainment and a later period once he had gained realization.[73] The briefer works discussed above achieved a similar aim by describing Mi la ras pa's activities at Brag dkar rta so, and those shortly thereafter, as fundamentally transformative, marking the moment in which he passes from ordinary individual to realized *siddha*. The topography in which these activities occur thereby map discrete advances to specific locations; the landscape thus becomes both the ground upon which the transformation occurs and the medium in which it is transcribed and recorded.

Reflections

As the genre of sacred biography aims to capture the arc of a saint's life over time, it also traces his or her acts in space. And the life of a saint, in one critic's view, overwhelmingly emphasizes the latter, so that "[h]agiography is marked by a predominance of precise indications of

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[73] The *Bu chen bcu gnyis*, for example, divides the narrative into two broad sections: 1) the qualities of hardships he faced, which are related to his family (*rigs dang ʾbrel ba dkaʾ ba sbyad paʾi yon tan*); and (2) the qualities of his experience, which are related to his meditation (*ting nge ʾdzin dang ʾbrel ba nyams su myong baʾi yon tan*). Numerous early *rnam thar* of Bkaʾ brgyud masters appear to follow this format, which may have served as an important literary structure in Tibet's nascent biographical tradition. Gtsang smyon Heruka orgainzed his standard version of the life story of "twelve marvelous and amazing deeds" into three "ordinary worldly deeds" (*thun mong srid pa ʾjig rten paʾi mdzad pa*) during the early part of the yogin's life and nine subsequent "deeds of supreme peace and nirvāṇa" (*mchog gyur zhi ba mya ngan las ʾdas paʾi mdzad pa*).

place over those of time" as the story itself becomes "translated into a course of places and changes of scene" ultimately defining a "geography of the sacred" (Certeau 1988:280). This essay has examined the topography of Mi la ras pa's life to argue for what might be considered a geographic biography: the life story inscribed in the "course of places" revealing maps of the life inscribed as points on the ground. The earliest versions of the biographical tradition represented the yogin in skeletal form and likewise drew the maps of his life in only the broadest of strokes. As the life story matured and drew portraits with progressively finer attention to detail, it likewise produced maps on a larger scale, culminating in a comprehensive survey of places visited, converted, lived in, and tamed. With few explicit chronological signs, the Life is indeed marked by a predominance of place over time.

Mi la ras pa's geographic biography, much like its literary partner, never fell to the level of mere received tradition. As authors of the biographical tradition laid greater emphasis on the places of Mi la ras pa's life, they formulated new and creative means for landscaping the story by laying alternative ground lines and marking new territories. Wilderness retreat sites were named and fortified, and those places were then organized into recognizable categories. This process culminated in Gtsang smyon Heruka's standard version in which this geography was reshaped and reclassified, with individual sites moved and, on occasion, removed.

This essay has likewise argued for a dialogical relationship between the writing of a life and the formation of sacred place. As dynamic phenomena, sacred places could shift and transform through the literary efforts of Mi la ras pa's biographers; those new mappings then helped reframe the ways in which the life story was understood. This essay has shown how dominion over much of southern Tibet passed from Padmasambhava to Mi la ras pa as narratives seem to converse across different strata of place and biographical memory. It has also revealed new maps of Mi la ras pa's life, emphasizing the trope of his liberation in one body and a single lifetime by connecting the stages of his yogic development to a series of specific locations on the ground.

As noted earlier, the maps of Mi la ras pa's life were not merely conceptual diagrams creating meditation castles in the sand. They described a physical topography visited by generations of devotees, pilgrims, and

meditators. Some places remain relatively undeveloped and infrequently accessed. Others became prominent and powerful Bka' brgyud institutions, supporting the spread of Mi la ras pa's legacy. But the sacrality of such locations could also transform the land so that the physical earth itself was considered sacred. Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor records how, during his journey through southern Tibet in 1790, he collected earth, stones, and wood from the outer, inner, and secret fortresses, as well as the minor caves associated with Mi la ras pa's life. He then describes using these materials as geographic relics to consecrate statues of Mi la ras pa and his retinue.[74] Although dead nearly seven centuries, the yogin persisted in the local environment as the land itself had become a geographic relic. This constellation of retreat caves and meditation sites, formed from rock and dirt and imagined as impenetrable strongholds, consolidated Mi la ras pa's footing across large portions of the southern Himalaya. The resulting terrain marked what would eventually come to be known, according to one modern pilgrimage guide, as "Milarepa Country" (Chan 1994:924).

References

Tibetan Language Sources

Anonymous
    JLC   *Byin rlabs kyi chu rgyun.*
    Editions:
    JLCI   Indian edition. Cover title: *Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mi la bzhad pa rdo
            rje'i gsung mgur ma mdzod nag ma zhes pa ka rma pa rang byung rdo rjes
            phyog bcig.* Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo. 1978. 2 vols.
    JLCS   Smith edition. Cover title: *Rje rnal sbyor gyi dbang phyug dpal bzhad pa'i rdo
            rje'i 'gur 'tshogs tshad phyogs gcig du bsgrig pa lo rgyus kyis sbas pa zhes bya ba
            bzhugs so.* Unpublished *dbu med* manuscript.

[74) Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, GZN, 517. He further notes an old proverb stating that keeping a statue of Phag mo gru pa in the home will make you wealthy, constructing a statue of Mi la ras pa will make you poor. (*'jig rten rgan rabs kyi kha rgyun la phag gru'i sku khyim do nyar na phyugs tu 'gro zhing/ rje btsun gyi sku nyar na dbul du phyin yong zer ba bcas ma bzhengs pa*).

Bstan ʾdzin Chos kyi blo gros (1868–1906)

LNY *Gsang lam sgrub paʾi gnas chen nyer bzhiʾi ya gyal gau daʾ wa riʾ am/ʾbrog la phyi gangs kyi ra baʾi sngon byung gi tshul las tsam paʾi gtam gyi rab tu phyed pa nyung ngu rnam gsal*. Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltsen 1983.

Bstan ʾdzin dpal ʾbyor, Rdo ring (b. 1760)

GZN *Dgaʾ bzhi baʾi rnam thar*. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang 1988.

Chos kyi dbang phyug, Brag dkar rta so sprul sku (1775–1837)

DKS *Dpal ldan gzhung ʾbrug pa Bkaʾ brgyud gser phreng*. Written 1820. Microfilm. Kathmandu, Nepal. NGMPP reel no. L381/1, 55 folios. *Dbu med* manuscript.

DTL *Grub paʾi gnas chen brag dkar rta soʾi gnas dang gdan rabs bla ma brgyud paʾi lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa mos ldan dad paʾi gdung sel drang srong dgaʾ baʾi dal gtam zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Written in 1816. Microfilm. Kathmandu, Nepal. NGMPP reel no. 940/8, 52 folios. *Dbu med* manuscript.

Dam pa ras chen (ca. early twelfth century).

NDN *Rgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu las rje btsun ngan rdzong ras paʾi rnam tharʾkhrul med*. In *Ngam rdzong snyan brgyud kyi skor*. Bir: D. Tsondu Senghe 1985, pp. 1–17.

Gtsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507)

NG *Rnal ʾbyor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras paʾi rnam mgur*. Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1981; reprint ed. 1989.

Gtsug lag phreng ba, Dpaʾ bo II (1504–1564)

KGT *Chos ʾbyung mkhas paʾi dgaʾ ston*. 2 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1986.

Mkhas pa ldeʾu (thirteenth century)

KDC *Rgya bod kyi chos ʾbyung rgyas pa*. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1987.

Ngan rdzong ston pa Byang chub rgyal po (b. late eleventh century) et al.

BC *Bu chen bcu gnyis*

Editions:

BCN Newark edition. Cover title: *Rje btsun chen po mid la ras paʾi rnam thar zab mo*. n.p., n.d. 244 folios. *Dbu can* manuscript in the collection of the Newark Museum, microfilm master negative No. 0001, the *Tibetan Book Collection*, Folio 36.280, *Biography of Milarepa*, IIB R 16.

BCO Oxford edition: No cover title. No title page. n.p., n.d. *Dbu can* manuscript in the Bodlean Library Microfilm Reel No. SN 1207 ms. Tib. a. 11a.

Nyang ral Nyi maʾi ʾod zer (1124/36–1192/1204)

CMN *Chos ʾbyung me tog snying po sbrang rtsiʾi bcud*. Gang can rig mdzod series no. 5, Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang 1988.

Padma dkar po (1527–1592)

DCJ *ʾBrug paʾi chos ʾbyung*. Gang-can rig-mdzod series no. 19. Lhasa: Bod-ljongs Bod-yig Dpe-rnying Dpe-skrun-khang 1992.

Rang byung rdor je, Karmapa III (1284–1339)

DNM   *Rje btsun mi la rdo rje rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar paʾi dbu phyogs lags. Dbu med* manuscript in the archives of ʾBras spung Monastery. *ʾBras spung dkar chag*: phyi ra 42, 017082. 309 folios.

Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol (1495–1570)

TNG   *Gtsang smyon her ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal baʾi rnam thar rdo rje theg paʾi gsal byed nyi maʾi snying po. The Life of the Saint of Gtsaṅ.* (Śata piṭaka Series Indo Asian Literatures 79.) Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi 1969.

Rgyal thang pa Bde chen rdo rje (ca. thirteenth century).

JGM   *Rje btsun gyi rgyal po mid la ras pʾi rnam thar.* In *Dkar brgyud gser ʾphreng: A Thirteenth Century Collection of Verse Hagiographies of the Succession of Eminent Masters of the ʾBrug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa Tradition*, Tashijong, India: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang 1973, 189–265.

Tshal pa Kun dgaʾ rdo rje (1309–1364)

RA   *Deb gter dmar po.* Mi rigs dpe skrun khang: Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1981.

Tshe dbang rgyal (ca. fifteenth century)

LRC   *Dam paʾi chos kyi byung baʾi legs bshad lho rong chos ʾbyung ngam rta tshag chos ʾbyung zhes rtsom paʾi yul ming du chags paʾi ngo mtshar zhing dkon paʾi dpe khyed par chan.* Khangs can rig mdzod 26. Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang 1994.

Tshe dbang nor bu, Kaḥ thog rigs ʾdzin. (1698–1755)

SDN   *Mar mi dwags po jo bo rje yab sras sog dam pa ʾgaʾ zhug gi rnam thar sa bon dus kyi nges pa brjod pa dag ldan nyung gsal.* In *Selected Writings of Kaḥ thog Rig ʾdzin Tshe dbang Nor bu.* 6 vols. Darjeeling: Kargyu Sungrab Nyamso Khang 1973, vol. 1, pp. 669–705.

Zhi byed ri pa (fourteenth century)

NDO   *Rje btsun mid la ras paʾi rnam par thar pa nyi zlaʾi ʾod zer sgron ma.* Manuscript in the archives of ʾBras spung Monastery. *ʾBras spungs dkar chag*: phyi ra 72, 017188, 105ff, 45 x 8 cm. (Pagination refers to computer print-out.)

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Ritualdiskurs, Ritualkritik und Meditationspraxis: Das Beispiel von Vipassanā nach S. N. Goenka im „Westen"[1]

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Abstract

By analysing primary sources, I show in this paper how the Vipassanā meditation movement publicly objects to being categorized as a religious movement that teaches a certain form of ritual. I argue that the application of the meta-language terms "ritual" or "religion" to the practices taught by this movement, even though it is doubtlessly possible, does not help us solve the problems in explaining this fact; nor does it help in analysing the movement and its history. I argue that it is more appropriate to understand the polemic differentiation by Vipassanā as a strategy in a "modern" public discourse on religion and ritual. It seems that the reason for applying this strategy lies in the wish to avoid being identified with negative connotations of the terms "ritual" and "religion," such as inefficacy, irrationality and exaggerated rigidity. Instead, the protagonists stress rationality, efficacy and adaptation to the necessities of modern Western society. On the other hand, the movement also draws a line between itself and a so-called modern "esotericism" in which "rituals" are regarded as highly positive in their effects on humans.

Keywords

Buddhism, discourse, Goenka, ritual, Vipassanā

> Doch d'Wält isch so perfid, dass sie sich sälte
> oder nie / nach Bilder, wo mir vorhär gmacht
> hei, richtet.
>
> Mani Matter, *Chue am Waldrand*

Einleitung

Bei der Beschäftigung mit der Vipassanā-Meditationsbewegung stößt man von Anfang an und immer wieder auf Äußerungen, die eine Abgrenzung gegenüber den Begriffen von „organisierter Religion" und „Ritus" oder „Ritual" beinhalten. Gleichzeitig scheint sich, wenn man einmal selbst teilnimmt oder Erfahrungsberichte, den Ablaufplan von 10-Tage-Kursen und andere Quellen der Bewegung liest, die Verwendung eines Ritualbegriffs aufzudrängen, und auch der ständige Verweis auf den historischen Buddha und seine Lehre, den *dhamma*, legt eine direkte Beziehung zu „Religion" nahe. Es tun sich hier scheinbar „innere" Widersprüche auf, die bei genauem Hinsehen erst dadurch entstehen, dass von „aussen" ein Ritual- und Religionsbegriff herangetragen und mit demjenigen der Bewegung selbst konfrontiert wird. Diese Ambivalenz lässt einige Fragen aufkommen, auf die dieser Aufsatz eine Antwort geben möchte: Wie lässt sich die starke Abgrenzung von Seiten Satya Narayan Goenkas (geb. 1924) und der von ihm autorisierten Lehrer gegenüber Religions- und Ritualbegriffen erklären? Warum die ständige Wiederkehr der Ritualkritik in den Schriften, in Vorträgen und in Aushängen im Verlauf der Kurse? Andererseits aber soll zunächst auch gefragt werden: Lässt sich die Verwendung eines wissenschaftlichen Ritualbegriffs in diesem konkreten Fall trotzdem rechtfertigen?

Der Aufsatz gliedert sich in vier Teile: Zunächst soll die Vipassanā-Bewegung kurz historisch und inhaltlich dargestellt werden. Zweitens werde ich einiges Quellenmaterial der Bewegung präsentieren, das deutlich die Verwendung eines polemischen Ritualbegriffs zeigt, von dem man sich abgrenzen möchte, auch wenn er nicht explizit definiert wird und offenbar voraussetzt, dass jedermann verstehen könne, was gemeint ist. Im dritten Teil werde ich Indizien aufzeigen, die es rechtfertigen könnten, trotzdem einen wissenschaftlichen Ritualbegriff anzuwenden, mit dessen Hilfe einzelne Aspekte von Lehre, Praxis und Erfolg der Bewegung zu erklären sein könnten. Ich werde allerdings argumentieren, dass die Ver-

wendung eines metasprachlichen Ritualbegriffs hier nur bedingt sinnvoll und vertretbar sein kann. In Teil vier soll im Gegensatz dazu die Ablehnung des Ritualbegriffs als eine diskursive Strategie beleuchtet werden. Dafür wird es notwendig sein, einen knappen Überblick über die Diskurse zu erhalten, in welche die jeweiligen den Ritualbegriff betreffenden Aussagen eingeordnet werden müssen.

Vipassanā-Meditation nach S. N. Goenka im Westen

Die Lehre, die sich mit der Vipassanā-Meditation[2] in den verschiedensten Strömungen verbindet, bezieht sich auf die „vierte Edle Wahrheit" des Buddha.[3] In der berühmten Predigt von Benares soll der Buddha darin den Weg zur Befreiung vom Leiden beschrieben haben. Erlösung sei durch Beschreiten des „edlen achtfachen Pfades" (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) zu erreichen: durch rechte Erkenntnis, rechte Gesinnung, rechte Rede, rechte Tat, rechten Lebenserwerb, rechte Anstrengung und rechte Sammlung; „[…] diese acht Glieder lassen sich jedoch auf drei Grundelemente zurückführen: Sittlichkeit (*sīla*), Sammlung (*samādhi*) und Wissen/Weisheit (*prajñā/paññā*) […]".[4] Diese drei Elemente wiederum sind es, die auch das Zentrum der Vipassanā-Meditation nach S. N. Goenka bilden, wie sie unten zu beschreiben sein wird. Goenka selbst führt die Lehrtradition, der er über seinen Lehrer U Ba Khin entstammt, bis auf den Buddha zurück, dessen Lehre durch die *arhants* Soṇa und Uttara ins Gebiet des heutigen Myanmar gebracht worden sei. Die direkten Vorgänger Goenkas sind dabei der Mönch Ledi Sayadaw (Saya Dala Thet, 1846–1923), der die Praxis der Meditation Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts für Laien öffnete, Saya Thetgyi (1873–1945) und U Ba Khin (1899–1971).[5]

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[2] Der Begriff *vipassanā* entstammt dem Aṅguttaranikāya II, 3, 10, und Dīghanikāya III, 213, wo eine Unterscheidung zwischen Beruhigungs- (*samatha*) und Einsichtsmeditationen (*vipassanā*) getroffen wird. Vgl. Schumann (2001:107).

[3] Dīghanikāya 22, 21; übersetzt in Mylius (1987:123–124).

[4] Lamotte (2000:54). Vgl. z. B. auch Schumann (2001:103–107).

[5] Confalonieri (2003:65–85). Vgl. auch Payer (2006:1.1). Payer (2006) bietet darüber hinaus anhand von Quellentexten einen sehr guten Überblick über moderne buddhistische Meditationsbewegungen.

Der Buddhologe, Journalist und Meditation Praktizierende Hans Gruber sieht in seinem *Kursbuch Vipassanā* den Ursprung des westlichen Vipassanā „in den klösterlichen Meditationstraditionen des buddhistischen Südostasiens" (Gruber 2001:61). Er unterscheidet als Ausgangspunkt zwei Gruppen von westlichen Lehrenden der ersten Generation, welche die Tradition nach Europa und Amerika brachten: solche, die in den südostasiatischen Klöstern selbst gelernt hatten, und solche, die von Laienmeistern unterrichtet worden waren. Zu diesen Laienmeistern gehört S. N. Goenka. Gruber bezeichnet die von Goenka gelehrte Technik als „Körperdurchkehren", die auf dessen Lehrer, den Burmesen Sayagyi U Ba Khin zurückgehe (Gruber 2001:44). Goenka selbst jedoch wehrt sich gegen eine solche Etikettierung, da er zur Erklärung und Illustration seiner Technik verschiedene Worte benutze, und das Englische *sweeping* eben eines davon sei, das zufällig herausgegriffen wurde, um seine Lehre zu bezeichnen.[6] Er selbst benutze auch *free flow* und anderes. So bevorzugen, nach Aussage Grubers, auch deutsche Lehrer oft den Begriff des Körperdurchfließens (Gruber 2001:45). Neben dem Ansatz der Mönche Mingun Sayadaw und Mahasi Sayadaw („Benennungsansatz") sei derjenige des Goenka in westlichen Vipassanā-Richtungen am verbreitetsten.

Satya Narayan Goenka war „ursprünglich ein international agierender, erfolgreicher Geschäftsmann" (Gruber 2001:45),[7] der selbst unter einem ehemals führenden Regierungsbeamten Burmas, Sayagyi U Ba Khin,[8] gelernt hatte und von diesem 1969 zum Lehren autorisiert wurde. U Ba Khin entstammte dem britisch verwalteten Burma, wo er

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[6] Goenka (2005:67): „Now another thing has started in the minds of the people, ‚This is U Ba Khin's technique, this is Goenka's technique, etc.' Again it's a question of suitably expressing Dhamma to people. U Ba Khin used the word ‚sweeping' and now in the West people say, ‚Oh, this is the ‚sweeping' technique of Goenka or U Ba Khin […]".

[7] Im Interview mit Fischer (Fischer 2001) sagt Goenka: „I was president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as president or secretary of at least twenty social organizations, including hospitals and schools."

[8] Auf U Ba Khin führen sich auch andere Meditationsbewegungen zurück, so beispielsweise die Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft mit Sitz in Marburg, die regelmäßig kostenpflichtige Kurse anbietet. Auf deren Homepage (www.subk-vipassana.de) findet sich kein Verweis auf die Richtung S. N. Goenkas (www.dhamma.org), ebensowenig wie auf der verwandten Homepage der Schweizer Gesellschaft (www.ubakhin.ch); meine Zugriffe am 01.03.2008. Zum Bezug Goenkas auf U Ba Khin, siehe Confalonieri (2003); zu U Ba Khins Biographie vgl. ebd. S. 21–44 und Kornfield (1977:235–256).

ab dem Alter von acht Jahren eine methodistische Schule besucht hatte. Danach hatte er seine Ausbildung an der *St. Paul's Institution* fortgesetzt; er schloss nach Aussage des Vipassanā-Lehrers Pierluigi Confalonieri alle Klassen als Bester ab (Confalonieri 2003:21). Statt zu studieren, was ein Stipendium ihm ermöglicht hätte, begann er auf Druck der Familie zu arbeiten. Er trat in den Staatsdienst ein, absolvierte 1926 die Prüfungen für den höheren Dienst und wurde im Zuge der Unabhängigkeit Burmas 1937 in das Amt des *Special Office Superintendent* berufen (Confalonieri 2003:22). U Ba Khin arbeitete 26 Jahre lang als hoher Regierungsbeamter. Er war außerdem Familienvater mit fünf Töchtern und einem Sohn. Ab Anfang 1937 praktizierte er als buddhistischer Laie Meditation, zu der er von Saya Thetgyi[9] gebracht wurde, der ihn später auch zum Lehren autorisierte. Er gehörte in den frühen 1950er Jahren zu den Mitorganisatoren des sechsten buddhistischen Konzils, das von 1954 bis 1956 in Rangoon (Yangon) stattfand.[10] Bereits 1952 hatte U Ba Khin ein eigenes Meditationszentrum eröffnet, um eine bessere Umgebung zur Meditation zu haben als in den Räumen des Regierungsgebäudes, die vorher genutzt worden waren (King 1964:225). Nur die letzten vier Jahre von U Ba Khins Leben waren ausschließlich dem Lehren von Vipassanā-Meditation gewidmet (Confalonieri 2003:22). Während seines Dienstes in der burmesischen Regierung unterrichtete er aber bereits ab 1950 Angestellte, Mitarbeiter und Kollegen, und unter seiner Führung wurde 1952 das *International Meditation Centre* in Rangoon gegründet. Zu seinen Schülern gehörte dabei auch S. N. Goenka.

Goenka hatte, an starker Migräne leidend, „rund um den Globus die besten Ärzte" aufgesucht, und konnte sich später durch die Meditationstechnik seines Lehrers „völlig befreien" (Gruber 2001:45).[11] Er

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[9] Über Saya Thetgyi vgl. Confalonieri (2003:75–81).

[10] Vgl. zu diesem Konzil auch kurz Vipassana Research Institute 1992:15.

[11] Vgl. dazu auch Goenkas eigene Aussage im Interview mit Norman Fischer, in Fischer (2001): „However, in 1955, at the age of 31, I started experiencing severe migraines and couldn't get any help or relief." Er sei dann zu U Ba Khin gegangen und habe ihn um Heilung gebeten, dieser habe ihm aber Heilung von Migräne verweigert und statt dessen angeboten, ihn gänzlich zu befreien durch die Vermittlung von *sīla, samādhi* und *paññā*. Dies geschah nach einer Phase ambivalenter Haltungen Goenkas gegenüber der Praxis. Erst nach einiger Zeit unterzog er sich einem Kurs. Der Topos der anfänglichen Ambivalenz des Schülers gegenüber dem („spirituellen") Lehrer lässt sich in (auto–)biographischen Schriften über religiöse Führungspersönlichkeiten immer wieder finden.

selbst und später auch von ihm ausgebildete und autorisierte Lehrer arbeiten seit 1969 vom Hauptstützpunkt Dhamma Giri in Igatpuri aus mit wachsendem Erfolg daran, die Technik im Westen zu popularisieren.[12] Neben diesem Ziel, das heute zunehmend auch im Rahmen von Psychologie[13] und Medizin sowie im Strafvollzugswesen[14] mit therapeutischen Zielen umgesetzt wird, möchte Goenka die Meditationstechnik auch in Indien, das er explizit als „das Heimatland des Buddhismus" bezeichnet, verbreiten. Inzwischen gibt es laut Aussage der Homepage www. dhamma.org (Mitte 2007) 67 Zentren in 23 Ländern der Welt, davon allein 37 in Indien. Das wichtigste indische Zentrum, Dhamma Giri mit dem dazugehörigen *Long Course Center* Dhamma Tapovana, befindet sich etwa vier Bahnstunden nordöstlich von Mumbai in der kleinen Stadt Igatpuri. Das deutsche Zentrum Dhamma Dvāra befindet sich in Triebel im Vogtland und bietet regelmäßig 10-Tage-Kurse an, die sowohl von neuen als auch „alten" Schülern[15] stark frequentiert werden. Kurse werden aber nicht nur in den offiziellen Zentren, sondern auch an Orten durchgeführt, die keine offiziellen Einrichtungen der Bewegung sind.

Um die Grundlagen der Meditationstechnik zu erlernen, ist nach Goenka die erfolgreiche Teilnahme an mindestens einem zehntägigen Kurs nötig.[16]

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[12] Bei der Ausbreitung des Vipassanā nach Westen würde es sich nach der von mir vorgeschlagenen Einteilung (Neubert 2006:6–7) um eine Mischung von missionarischem und importierendem Transfer handeln. Während S. N. Goenka selbst eine deutliche Missionierungsabsicht zeigt (Verbreitung seiner Technik im Westen und in Indien, eigene Reisen im Westen und Abhalten von Kursen dort), sind es v. a. westliche, von Goenka als Lehrer autorisierte Schüler, die Vipassanā im Westen vermitteln. Zudem gehen viele alte Schüler nach Indien, um in Dhamma Giri selbst von Goenka die Technik zu erlernen.

[13] Dazu z. B. die Arbeiten von Nina Buchheld. Eine kurze Zusammenstellung relevanter Literatur in Buchheld (2005). Vgl. auch den von Naurial, Drummond und Lal herausgegebenen Sammelband (2006) sowie Vipassana Research Institute (2005).

[14] Vipassanā-Kurse für Gefängnisinsassen gibt es in Burma unter dem Einfluss U Ba Khins seit 1957. Auch in Indien und im Westen finden sie immer mehr Beachtung. Vgl. dazu auch Vipassana Research Institute (2005).

[15] Als „alte Schüler" (engl. „old students") werden solche Kursteilnehmer bezeichnet, die bereits mindestens einen Kurs erfolgreich absolviert haben. Während des Kurses, an dem ich selbst kurzzeitig teilnahm, waren Anfang August 2006 etwa 80 Schüler anwesend, von denen etwas mehr als die Hälfte „alte Schüler" waren.

[16] Die Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft und andere Vipassanā betreibende Gemeinschaften bieten beispielsweise auch kürzere Einführungskurse an, manche eintägige, andere Wochenendkurse.

Die Teilnahme an den Kursen ist kostenlos, die Zentren finanzieren sich allein auf Spendenbasis. Dazu gehört, dass alle Lehrer und Helfer diese Aufgaben ehrenamtlich ausführen. Finanzielle Spenden und Helfertätigkeiten werden nur von Personen akzeptiert, die mindestens einen Kurs erfolgreich absolviert haben und durch ihre Zuwendung auch anderen die gleiche Erfahrung ermöglichen möchten. Aufbauend auf die 10-Tage-Kurse gibt es fortschreitende Kurse, die auch länger dauern können (30 oder sogar 45 Tage). Allerdings wird gefordert, mehrere 10-Tage-Kurse zu absolvieren und auch selbst zuhause weiter zu praktizieren, bevor man sich zu einem längeren *retreat* anmeldet. Zudem wird dafür eine streng an den Regeln der buddhistischen *sīla* ausgerichtete Lebensführung im Alltag erwartet.[17] Alle 10-Tage-Kurse finden in abgeschlossenen Zentren statt und beinhalten einen völligen Rückzug von der Alltagswelt, das Verzichten auf jeglichen Außenkontakt und ein neuntägiges Schweigen („edle Stille"), das am zehnten Kurstag gebrochen wird. Das Schweigen wird damit begründet, dass sich die Teilnehmer nur so auf sich selbst und die zu erlernende Meditationstechnik fokussieren können. Am zehnten Tag sollen sie sich dann aber über ihre Erfahrungen mit der Technik austauschen.

Der Tagesplan sieht zunächst folgenden Ablauf vor, der in den einzelnen Kursen nur sehr leicht variiert:

4:00 Uhr	Gong — Aufstehen
4:30–6:30	Meditation in der Halle oder auf dem Zimmer
6:30–8:00	Frühstückspause
8:00–9:00	Gruppenmeditation in der Halle
9:00–11:00	Meditation in der Halle oder auf dem Zimmer
11:00–12:00	Mittagessen
12:00–13:00	Ruhepause
13:00–14:30	Meditation in Halle oder Zimmer (je nach Anweisung)
14:30–15:30	Gruppenmeditation in der Halle
15:30–17:00	Meditation in Halle oder Zimmer (je nach Anweisung)
17:00–18:00	Teepause
18:00–19:00	Gruppenmeditation in der Halle

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[17] Eine Praktizierende aus Mexiko erklärte mir bei einem Interview in Mumbai (02.01.2007), sie selbst könne sich nicht vorstellen, die Regeln der *sīla* so streng einzuhalten, dass sie zu einem langen Kurs zugelassen würde. Die 10-Tage-Kurse besuche sie aber sehr regelmäßig. Zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews stand gerade ihre fünfte Teilnahme kurz bevor.

19:00–20:30   Vortrag des Lehrers in der Halle (in Triebel 2006 bis 20:15)
20:30–21:00   Gruppenmeditation in der Halle
21:00–21:30   Zeit für Fragen in der Halle
21:30 Uhr   Nachtruhe

Dieser Ablaufplan ist in Internetauftritten der Zentren (z. B. www.dvara.dhamma.org) und in den Publikationen der Bewegung[18] zu finden. Die Anwesenheit der Schüler zu den Gruppenmeditationen in der Meditationshalle wird von den jeweils zuständigen Betreuern überprüft (ein Betreuer für Männer, eine Betreuerin für Frauen). Die Betreuer sind in technischen, organisatorischen und, falls nötig, persönlichen Belangen die alleinigen Ansprechpartner für die ansonsten zu möglichst völliger Kommunikationslosigkeit verpflichteten Schüler. Um letztere durchzusetzen werden zu Beginn des Kurses alle Teilnehmer aufgefordert, Mobiltelefone, Bücher, Schreibmaterialien, Musikgeräte und alles abzugeben, was für Ablenkung von der Meditation sorgen könnte.[19]

Das in den Essenspausen servierte Speisenangebot ist einfach und vegetarisch. In der nachmittäglichen Teepause dürfen neue Schüler Obst zu sich nehmen, alte nur noch Zitronenwasser.[20] Alle Schüler versprechen zu Beginn des Kurses, nicht zu töten, nicht zu stehlen, keusch zu leben, nicht zu lügen und keine Rauschmittel zu sich zu nehmen. Für alte Schüler gelten drei zusätzliche Regeln: nach 12 Uhr Mittags nichts mehr zu essen, auf Körperschmuck und sinnliche Vergnügungen zu verzichten und nicht in übertrieben luxuriösen Betten zu schlafen.[21]

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[18] Z. B. Bartsch (2002:195). Ein Tagesplan eines Kurses unter U Ba Khin findet sich in King 1964:227.

[19] Auch für den zur Forschung kommenden Wissenschaftler wird dabei keine Ausnahme gemacht. Auf meine Bitte um eine Ausnahmegenehmigung zur Mitnahme von Schreibmaterial, um meine Feldforschungseindrücke aufzeichnen zu können, wurde mir deutlich gesagt, dass auch für mich diese Regeln nicht gelockert würden.

[20] Nach Aussage einer Praktizierenden variiert die Strenge der Umsetzung dieser Regel. An anderen Orten sei es z. B. möglich, Milch und Tee in der letzten Pause zu bekommen (Gespräch am 02.01.2007, Mumbai).

[21] Der genaue Wortlaut kann in den Teilnahmebedingungen nachgelesen werden, die jeder Schüler zu Beginn des Kurses anerkennt: http://dvara.dhamma.org/de/kurse/index.html; mein Zugriff am 01.08.2007. Die fünf bzw. acht Regeln stellen offenbar eine Kondensation aus den schon lange in buddhistischen Traditionen überlieferten zehn „Negativ-Regeln" (Schumann 2001:108) dar.

Die Entwicklung der in den Zentren gelehrten Meditationstechnik selbst ist eng mit der buddhistischen Debatte um den richtigen Weg zur Erlösung vom Leiden („vierte edle Wahrheit") und der Interpretation des „edlen achtfachen Pfades" verbunden.[22] Sie beruht zentral auf den Erläuterungen des Buddha zur richtigen Meditationsweise aus dem *Sāmaññaphala-Sutta* oder *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna-Sutta, Dīghanikāya* 22 bzw. *Majjhimanikāya* 10,[23] sowie dem *Ānāpānasatisutta, Majjhimanikāya* 118.[24] Die Technik[25] beruht zunächst auf einem Bewusstwerden der Atmung (*ānāpāna*). Geübt wird in sitzender Haltung, jedem Teilnehmer ist ein fester Platz zugewiesen, der nach Belieben mit Kissen und Decken ausgestattet werden kann. Man soll aufrecht und mit geschlossenen Augen meditieren.[26] Drei Tage nacheinander praktizieren die Teilnehmenden nach Anweisungen Goenkas (wenn er, wie meist der Fall, nicht persönlich anwesend ist, dann von CD) die Fokussierung des Geistes, indem alle Aufmerksamkeit auf die an den Nasenlöchern ein- und ausfließende Luft gerichtet wird. Dabei wird auch geübt, sich aller auftretenden Ablenkungen bewusst zu werden und diese nach und nach auszuschalten. Nach diesen vorbereitenden Übungen in der Kontrolle des Geistes, die auch seiner Beruhigung (*samatha*) dienen sollen, beginnt am vierten Tag der Unterricht in der eigentlichen Vipassanā-Meditation. Dabei geht es um das schrittweise Bewusstwerden der eigenen Empfindungen und Sinneswahrnehmungen (engl. *sensations*). Ein

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[22] Dazu bspw. auch Oldenberg (1961:267–305); Hutter (2001:41–43).

[23] Es handelt sich jeweils um den gleichen Text. Übersetzung z. B. in Mylius (1985:109–125). Erläuterung und Übersetzung auch in Mehlig (1987:178–193). Ein Ausschnitt auch in Goenka (1987:78–79), wo die in den Vorträgen zitierten Textstellen angegeben und übersetzt werden. Dabei handelt es sich um die ab dem zweiten bis zum neunten Vers am Ende jedes Verses wiederholten Zeilen.

[24] Erläuterung und Übersetzung in Mehlig (1987:166–177).

[25] Anweisungen für die zehn Kurstage aus einer anderen Strömung (nicht Goenka) finden sich beispielsweise unter http://www.buddhanet.net/imol/retreat/retreatxx.html, wobei „xx" für die Nummer des jeweiligen Tages (00, 01, 02 etc. bis 11) steht; mein Zugriff am 05.04.2008.

[26] Interessanterweise wird die Sitzhaltung erst unter Goenka so vergleichsweise streng gehandhabt, während zumindest für westliche Teilnehmer unter U Ba Khin in Bezug auf eine Reihe von Regeln noch mehr Freiheit bestand, wie King beschreibt (1964:227): „We ate our meals together in my wife's room, and we were allowed a light meal in the late afternoon, a privilege not given to our Burmese fellow-meditators. Likewise, we could experiment with meditational positions till we found those that allowed the maximum amount of comfort compatible with meditation."

deutscher Teilnehmer mehrerer Kurse beschrieb diesen Teil des Kurses wie folgt:

> Ab dem vierten Tag beginnt dann die eigentliche Vipassana-Meditation [...]. Dabei wird die Aufmerksamkeit wie ein „Scanner" verwendet und durch den gesamten Körper geführt. Hierbei ist es wichtig, sämtliche Empfindungen die an der Stelle des Körpers auftreten wahrzunehmen [sic!] und alle anderen Empfindungen in anderen Stellen des Körpers zu ignorieren. Außerdem kommt es darauf an, diese auftretenden Empfindungen nicht zu bewerten und nicht auf sie zu reagieren. Hierdurch soll die Vergänglichkeit aller Dinge verdeutlicht und am eigenen Körper erfahrbar gemacht werden. Im Laufe des Kurses wird der Bereich, auf den die Aufmerksamkeit gerichtet ist, immer weiter verkleinert, so dass ein höheres Maß an Konzentrationsfähigkeit erreicht wird. Dabei tritt der Meditierende immer tiefer in die unbewussten Bereiche seines Geistes ein und stößt dabei auf alte Verhaltens- und Denkmuster, wie Zwangshandlungen, auf die er sonst unbewusst immer reagiert hat. Diese manifestieren sich, der Lehre nach, als bestimmte angenehme oder unangenehme Empfindungen im Körper, da die unbewussten Bereiche des Geistes in ständigem Kontakt mit den Empfindungen im Körper stehen. Durch die durch die Meditation verstärkte Achtsamkeit kann der Meditierende diese Empfindungen nun wahrnehmen und gleichmütig, ohne Wertung und Reaktion auf sie, betrachten. Dadurch findet eine Umstrukturierung des Geistes statt; der Meditierende erkennt die Vergänglichkeit seiner Gedankenmuster und kann so lernen, damit aufzuhören auf gewisse, für ihn leid-schaffende [sic!] Gedanken und Handlungen zu reagieren.[27]

Der Buddhologe und Praktizierende Harvey B. Aronson beschreibt seine eigenen Erfahrungen in einem Kurs mit besonderem Bezug auf die Tage vier bis zehn:

> We were initially taught how to observe our breath, which we did for the first four days. After that we shifted to a careful observation of everything that was going on in our bodies and minds. This was mindfulness meditation, applying focused attention to physical and mental processes in order to understand their true nature. Most challenging were the vow sittings. For this hour, we were instructed to make a firm commitment to sit without moving and carefully observe what went on within.
>
>   After practicing in this way for two and a half days, I felt wonderful. My mind was focused. I felt calmer. I believed that I had already become a skilled meditator.

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[27] Denis Leuthner, Die Rezeption der Vipassana-Meditation im Westen. Unveröffentlichte Hausarbeit, Heidelberg 2007.

> The very next day, I felt miserable, distracted and uncomfortable in my body. My mind was filled with doubt and frustration. (Aronson 2004:4–5)

Am letzten Kurstag findet wiederum eine Veränderung statt, wenn es darum geht, erstens das Schweigegelübde zu brechen und dies zweitens im Rahmen einer neuen Form der Meditation zu tun, des Praktizierens von *mettā*, „allumfassender Liebe und Güte".

Viele Absolventen eines Kurses berichten wie Aronson, dass sie weniger inneren Druck verspürten, als sie nach Kursende wieder in den eigenen Alltag einstiegen, dass sie sich friedvoller und weniger gestresst fühlten.[28] Allerdings beinhalten die Berichte mehrerer Teilnehmer, dass v. a. die ersten Kurse als alte Schüler härter seien. Man wisse dann, wie der Kurs verläuft und welche Anforderungen er stellt, und habe dadurch häufig größere Schwierigkeiten beim Sitzen der Kurse; man müsse eine deutlich größere Durchhaltebereitschaft aufbringen und sich viel stärker immer wieder selbst motivieren, was bei vielen nur über die buddhistischen Lehrinhalte — also primär die Identifikation mit den Vier Edlen Wahrheiten — funktioniere.[29]

Der Religions- und Ritualbegriff in den Vipassanā-Quellen

Immer wieder begegnet man in den Quellen der Bewegung Aussagen, die eine klare Abgrenzung von Begriffen wie „organisierte Religion" und „Ritual" beinhalten. Es handle sich bei der Vipassanā-Meditation um eine Technik, die der Buddha im Rahmen seiner universellen Lehre verbreitet habe, um die universellen Werte von *sīla* (sittlichem Verhalten), *samādhī* (Konzentration) und *paññā* (Weisheit) zu propagieren. Nicht aber handle es sich um „inhaltsleere" oder „blinde" Riten oder Rituale. Auch habe der Buddha keine organisierte Religion gelehrt, sondern eine Lehre, die im Laufe von Institutionalisierung (z. B. in den Konzilen und durch Schulenbildung) verfälscht worden sei.

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[28] Aronson (2004:5): „At the end of that first ten-day retreat, I noticed less internal pressure as I reentered my everyday world. I felt noticeably more at peace, less frenetic."

[29] So berichtete beispielsweise ein Teilnehmer in einem persönlichen Gespräch in Igatpuri am 03.01.2007.

Die Auseinandersetzung mit Religions- und Ritualbegriffen in den Vipassanā-Quellen findet auf zwei verschiedenen Ebenen statt. Zum einen geht es um das Verhältnis der Schüler zu anderen religiösen Bekenntnissen und Praktiken, zum Anderen um die Einordnung der Vipassanā-Meditation selbst in Kategorien des öffentlichen Sprachgebrauchs. Für beide Fälle werde ich im Folgenden einige Belege anführen.

Bereits die *Einführung in die Technik*, auf die man bei den Kursinformationen im Internet stößt, enthält unter der Zwischenüberschrift „Was Vipassana nicht ist" den zentralen Satz: „Es ist kein Ritus oder Ritual, das auf blindem Glauben beruht."[30] Die Teilnahmebedingungen für einen 10-Tage-Kurs[31] enthalten unter der Überschrift „Andere Techniken, Riten und religiöse Praktiken" die Aufforderung, auf eben deren Ausübung zu verzichten. Auffällig ist dabei die durchaus als polemisch zu verstehende Bezeichnung der Praktiken, z. B. als „Zählen von Perlen", bei dem wahrscheinlich das Beten von Rosenkränzen und das Singen von Mantras mit Hilfe einer Perlenkette (wie z. B. in der Hare Krishna Bewegung) gemeint ist:

> Es ist absolut notwendig, für die Dauer des Kurses alle Formen des Betens, der Gottes- und Heiligenverehrung oder sonstiger religiöser Zeremonien — einschließlich Fasten, Abbrennen von Räucherstäbchen, Zählen von Perlen, Rezitieren von Mantras, Singen und Tanzen etc. — völlig einzustellen. Alle anderen Meditationstechniken und Heilungspraktiken sollen gleichfalls unterlassen werden. Damit soll keine andere Technik oder Praxis disqualifiziert werden, es dient lediglich dazu, Ihnen zu ermöglichen, der Vipassana-Technik in ihrer Ganzheit einen fairen Versuch zu geben. [...] Trotz wiederholter Warnungen der Lehrer hat es in der Vergangenheit Fälle gegeben, in denen Schüler/innen diese Technik absichtlich zusammen mit Ritualen oder anderen Praktiken ausgeübt haben und sich damit selbst einen schlechten Dienst erwiesen haben.

Weiter unten heißt es unter „Religiöse Objekte, Rosenkränze, Talismane etc.":

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[30] Einführung in die Technik, online z. B. unter http://www.dvara.dhamma.org/de/kurse/index.html, mein Zugriff am 01.08.2007.

[31] Teilnahmebedingungen für Meditationskurse, online z. B. unter http://www.dvara.dhamma.org/de/kurse/index.html, mein Zugriff am 01.08.2007. Die beiden folgenden Zitate entstammen dieser Webseite.

> Alle Gegenstände dieser Art sollten nicht zum Kurs mitgebracht werden. Sind sie unbedachterweise [sic!] doch mitgenommen worden, sollten sie für die Dauer des Kurses beim Management hinterlegt werden.

Nimmt man an einem Kurs teil, so wird man von Anfang an im Vortrag Goenkas von CD darauf hingewiesen, dass es sich nicht um ein „inhaltsleeres Ritual" handle und nicht um „blinden Gehorsam" gehe, sondern dass man die Regeln und Anweisungen verstehen und sich im Zweifelsfall an einen Lehrer wenden solle. Eine ähnliche Abgrenzung findet bei der Erläuterung von zu beobachtenden Handlungen statt. So fällt dem neuen Teilnehmer schon am Einführungsabend auf, dass viele alte Schüler im Anschluss an den Vortrag und die Chantings Goenkas aus dem Pāli-Kanon, die immer mit dem dreimaligen *„bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ"* („Mögen alle Wesen glücklich sein") enden, mit einem dreifachen *„sādhu"* („Gut") antworten und sich verneigen. Bereits am nächsten Tag liest man in der Nähe des Speisesaales einen Aushang, der diese Praxis erläutert: Es handele sich nicht um ein „inhaltsleeres Ritual" oder einen „Ritus", und auch nicht um die Verehrung einer Person, sondern um die Einverständniserklärung der Schüler mit dem Wunsch Goenkas und die Verneigung vor der Wahrheit und dem *dhamma*. Niemand, so sagt der Aushang, solle sich genötigt fühlen, sich diesen Handlungen anzuschließen. Gleichwohl fällt auf, dass nach der Mittagspause auch zahlreiche neue Teilnehmer das dreifache *„sādhu"* sprechen und sich verneigen. Ähnlich verhält es sich mit den Verbeugungen vor dem Lehrer und den Assistenzlehrern zu Beginn und Ende der Meditationssitzungen. Dabei handle es sich explizit nicht um Personenverehrung, sondern wiederum um eine Verneigung vor der Weisheit und dem *dhamma;* nicht um eine rituelle, verpflichtende Handlung, sondern um etwas, das man freiwillig tun könne, aber nicht müsse.

Schließlich möge auch S. N. Goenka selbst zu Wort kommen. Ich beziehe mich hier auf die Zusammenstellungen von Vorträgen und Interviews in *For the Benefit of Many* (Goenka 2005) sowie auf das bereits zitierte Interview von Norman Fischer mit ihm.

Letzteres enthält die folgende Passage, beginnend mit Fischers zweiter Frage an Goenka:

> Fischer: In my Zen practice and in other forms of Buddhist practice, there is a lot of ritual, and also clergy and hierarchy. Do you feel there's any benefit or advantage for Buddhism in ritual?
>
> 　Goenka: I don't wish to condemn anybody, but if my teacher had asked me to perform rites or rituals, I would have said good-bye. My own Hindu tradition was full of rituals and ceremonies, so to start again with another set of rituals didn't make sense. But my teacher said, „No ritual. Buddha taught only sila, samadhi, panna. Nothing else. There is nothing to be added and nothing to be subtracted. As the Buddha said, ‚Kevalaparipunnam.'[Pali: ‚The whole technique is complete by itself.']" (Fischer 2001; die Klammer gehört zum Zitat)

An späterer Stelle geht es um die Universalität der Lehre des Buddha, die sich laut Goenka darin zeige, dass Menschen aller Religionen und Konfessionen die gleichen Resultate mit Vipassanā erzielen.

> There may be different techniques. We don't say that this is the only way. For me it is the only way, but other religions say that they have another way for people to find peace and harmony. Very good, go ahead.
>
> 　But what I am teaching is universal. Anybody can practice it, from any religion or tradition, and they will get the same result. We have people coming to vipassana courses from every religion in the world, and they all get the same result. (Goenka in Fischer [2001])

Daher sei es auch nicht nötig, dass jemand zu irgend einer Religion (gemeint ist offensichtlich: zum Buddhismus als organisierter Religion) konvertiere. Die einzige Konversion, die stattfinde, sei die „from misery to happiness".

In seinen Vorträgen und Antworten geht Goenka mehrfach auf den Religions- und Ritualbegriff ein. Im Register zu *For the Benefit of Many* sind elf Stellen für „rites and rituals" sowie zwölf Stellen für „religion" verzeichnet (Goenka 2005:192), wobei hier auch der Verweis „See also ‚rites and rituals: participating in'" angegeben ist. Man gewinnt den Eindruck, dass Religion und Ritual hier mit verwandten, negativen Assoziationen verwendet werden. Dies zeigt sich auch, wenn man die Einträge für Ritual im Text nachschlägt. Die Abgrenzung verläuft grundsätzlich nach dem Muster: Welche Rituale und Religionen man auch immer befolge, Vipassanā sei etwas anderes, sei weder Religion noch Ritual, es sei universell, stehe über den Religionen und sei im Gegensatz zu Ritualen wirksam. Die Meditationstechnik enthalte die Werte, die andere Religionen in Ritualen etc. zum Ausdruck bringen. Auf die Frage, wie

Vipassanā in einer Situation der Pluralität von Religionen und Bräuchen helfen könne, antwortete Goenka am 03.03.1989 in einer Fragestunde:

> Vipassana is the only way to help in such a situation. In all these sects, communities, beliefs, religions, rites, and rituals, there is something universal: the goal of purifying the mind to such an extent that you will not harm yourself or others. Now one may belong to any community or belief, but everyone can accept this […]. (Goenka 2005:33)

Diese Textstelle findet sich, wenn man den Angaben im Index unter „rites and rituals during course" folgt. Darunter stößt man als Zweites auf eine Antwort vom 20.01.1996. Goenka bezieht sich darin auf die klaren Anweisungen in den Kursen. Was hier deutlich wird, ist die Haltung, dass niemand konvertieren müsse, die Meditationstechnik aber außerhalb jeder Religion stehe und stehen müsse.

> If every day I remember the gods in whom I have faith, then what harm is there in doing so during the course?
>
> Because during the course the object of your meditation is different. During the course, while you are practicing Anapana, the object of your meditation is respiration. That is all, nothing else. And during Vipassana, the object is the sensation on the body, nothing else. So during this time if you also try to imagine your god or goddess, then you are diverting your attention and you are not working properly. Whatever the importance of meditation, give all importance to that. At the end of the course if you have great respect or great devotion to this god or that goddess, then share your merits with him or her and send *mettā*. That's all, nothing more. (Goenka 2005:117)

Was für Religionen im Allgemeinen gilt, wird in ähnlicher Weise auf konkret gedachte Religionen und besonders den Buddhismus angewandt. Goenka und seine Assistenzlehrer beziehen sich zwar immer auf den Buddha und den *dhamma* als letztgültige Autorität,[32] eine Zugehörigkeit zum Buddhismus oder einer seiner Schulen wird jedoch strikt abgelehnt, wie nicht zuletzt aus folgenden Sätzen deutlich wird:

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[32] Seiwert (1986) zufolge ist es damit metasprachlich durchaus möglich, die Bewegung dem Feld des „historischen Buddhismus" zuzuordnen. Dies wird weiter unten kurz zu erläutern sein.

The next volume will be about Dhamma, to explain how Buddha was not a founder of any religion or any sect. What he taught was the law of nature; he discovered the law of nature. I would say that he was a super-scientist. [...] You see, Dhamma is not Buddhism. Buddha never taught Buddhism. He had nothing to do with Buddhism. He taught Dhamma. [...] This point should be well understood by students. (Goenka 2005:110)

In diesem Sinne gibt Goenka selbst auch die Ansicht seines Lehrers U Ba Khin wieder. „U Ba Khin was Buddhist by birth and felt quite proud and satisfied to say so, but it was very clear in his teaching that his intention was not to convert people from one organized religion to another organized religion" (Goenka in Confalonieri [2003:39]).

Metasprachlich: Vipassanā als religiöse Bewegung und Ritual?

Das Setting eines 10-Tagekurses wirkt streng und diszipliniert, der Tagesablauf lässt [sic!] keinen Raum zur Eigeninitiative. Durch das Gebot zu schweigen, durch den Verzicht auf die Ablenkungen des Alltags, wie Fernsehen und Lesen, und durch die Reduktion der Kommunikation mit dem Lehrer auf ‚meditationstechnische Fragen' bietet der Besuch der Kurse keine Gelegenheit, sich zu zerstreuen, gesellig zusammen zu sein oder Kontakte zu knüpfen. Die Perspektive, 10–12 Stunden am Tag zu meditieren, die Schmerzen auszuhalten, die sich durch das lange Sitzen ergeben, und sich den psychischen Konsequenzen der Deprivation zu stellen, erfordert von den Teilnehmern eine starke Durchhaltebereitschaft. (Vogd 1998:157)

Mit anderen Worten: Die Teilnahme an einem Vipassanā-Kurs erfordert ein hohes *commitment* der Teilnehmer, auf das weiter unten noch einzugehen sein wird.

Zunächst sei aber anhand einer möglichen Definition von „Ritual" die Ablehnung des Ritualbegriffs durch die Bewegung selbst aus der Sicht eines religionswissenschaftlichen, *metasprachlichen* Begriffsverständnisses hinterfragt. Welche empirischen Befunde können die Verwendung eines metasprachlichen Ritualbegriffs in diesem Falle dennoch angezeigt erscheinen lassen? Erst danach soll es um die Diskussion der Frage gehen, in welchem Sinne die Verwendung eines solchen metasprachlichen Begriffs hilfreich und sinnvoll sein könnte, auch wenn er der Verwendung durch die Teilnehmer und Verantwortlichen selbst zuwider läuft.

Zur Verdeutlichung ziehe ich hier die Definition heran, die Axel Michaels (1999) vorgelegt hat, wenngleich andere Ansätze ebenso in Frage kommen könnten. Michaels unterscheidet nach seiner Definition Rituale von anderen, nicht rituellen Formen des Handelns anhand von fünf Kriterien (Michaels 1999:29–36). Es gebe erstens eine ursächliche Veränderung, die Anlass zum rituellen Handeln gebe, Rituale werden zweitens durch einen förmlichen Beschluss (*intentio solemnis*) als solche gekennzeichnet, drittens seien mit Förmlichkeit/Repetitivität, prinzipieller Öffentlichkeit und Unwiderruflichkeit drei formale Kriterien gegeben. Drei modale Kriterien (Gemeinschaftlichkeit/*societas*, Transzendenzbezug/*religio*, Bezug zu Emotionen/*impressio*) bilden das vierte Merkmal von Ritualen.[33] Veränderungen in Identität, Status, Bedeutung, Rolle oder Kompetenz bei Ritualteilnehmern oder involvierten Objekten bilden schließlich das fünfte Kriterium. Es ist recht leicht zu zeigen, dass diese Kriterien bei einem Vipassanā-Kurs erfüllt sind. Die größten Schwierigkeiten bereitet dabei wohl das erste Kriterium, aber auch hier werden von vielen Teilnehmern Ereignisse genannt, die man als „ursächliche Veränderung" vor der ersten Teilnahme interpretieren kann. So berichtete eine Praktizierende: „Als der Stress in der Familie und auf Arbeit immer größer und meine Kopfschmerzen immer heftiger wurden, spürte ich plötzlich, dass es an der Zeit war, einen Kurs auszuprobieren."[34] Auch Goenka selbst berichtet, der Auslöser für seine Teilnahme an Kursen seines Meisters sei die zunehmende Unerträglichkeit seines Migräne-Leidens gewesen, aber erst die Befreiung von diesem partikularen Wunsch und die Suche nach einer „ganzheitlichen Lösung" habe zu seiner Aufnahme als Schüler geführt. Ähnliche Aussagen lassen sich finden, und auch wenn dies wahrscheinlich kein repräsentatives Bild der Meditierenden gibt, so genügt es um sagen zu können, dass zumindest bei einigen Teilnehmern das Kriterium der „ursächlichen Veränderung" als erfüllt betrachtet werden kann. Mit der Verpflichtung aller Teilnehmer, den Kurs möglichst in Gänze „durchzusitzen", dem Sprechen der dreifachen Zuflucht[35] und dem Gelübde die Regeln einzuhalten, ist in der Eröffnungssitzung

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[33] Für eine ausführlichere Diskussion dieser Definition vgl. Neubert (2006: 5–6).

[34] Gespräch in Hyderabad, 17.01.2007.

[35] „Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, saṅgaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi." (Ich nehme Zuflucht beim Buddha, beim Dhamma und beim Sanga.)

eines Kurses deutlich ein förmlicher Beschluss (*intentio solemnis*, zweites Definitionskriterium) gegeben. Damit ist gleichzeitig auch ein Kriterium erfüllt, das von Michaels nicht explizit genannt wird, aber in anderen Ansätzen eine herausragende Rolle spielt: Die Teilnahme und die Entbehrungen während des Kurses erfordern ein starkes *commitment* der Teilnehmer, das sich auch in der oben zitierten „Durchhaltebereitschaft" zeigt. Das Versprechen und das Zufluchtnehmen erfüllen dabei auch die Aufgabe, den Teilnehmern dieses bewusst zu machen und es womöglich auch zu unterstützen und zu verstärken.

Auch die formalen Kriterien dürfen als erfüllt gelten, wenn man den immer gleichen Ablauf der Kurse, das stereotype Abspielen der Lehrreden und Rezitationen Goenkas von CD und die streng formalisierten Regeln für das Verhalten während eines Kurses in Betracht zieht. Der Kurs ist auch unwiderruflich insofern, als jedem, der einen ganzen Kurs „gesessen" hat, im Wiederholungsfalle strengere Regeln auferlegt werden als den neuen Schülern. Der Übergang vom neuen zum alten Schüler erfüllt damit auch das fünfte Kriterium der Veränderung von Identität und Status. Zum alten Schüler wird man nur auf einem einzigen möglichen Weg, durch Absolvieren eines 10-Tage-Kurses. Als solcher hat man das Privileg, Zugang zu deutlich mehr Material (hauptsächlich online durch ein Passwort) zu erhalten, das Recht zu spenden und als Helfer zu arbeiten, aber auch die Pflicht zu härterer Disziplin bei Folgekursen. Wie steht es um die modalen Kriterien? *Societas* entsteht während des Kurses dadurch, dass alle Meditierenden gezwungen sind, eine Gemeinschaft zu formen, weil sie auf abgeschlossenem Raum leben, gemeinsam meditieren und einen einheitlichen Tagesablauf befolgen, ja sogar einem festen Set von Regeln unterworfen sind. Wenn auch Kommunikation jeglicher Art eigentlich untersagt ist, lässt sie sich doch nie ganz vermeiden, und Formen der nonverbalen und teilweise vielleicht sogar unbeabsichtigten Kommunikation entstehen zwischen den Teilnehmern und lassen sich beobachten. Am letzten Tag sollen sich die Teilnehmer nach dem Brechen des Schweigegelübdes gegenseitig von ihren Erfahrungen berichten, was die Gemeinschaftsbildung in der Gruppe und auch die Bindung an andere Praktizierende fördert. Hinzu kommt, dass sich im Laufe der Zeit durch die Kontakte der Schüler untereinander in mehreren Städten immer mehr private Meditationskreise gebildet haben, die außerhalb der organisierten

Kurse regelmäßig Vipassanā praktizieren und ausschließlich aus alten Schülern bestehen. Der deutliche und ständige Bezug auf den Buddha und den *dhamma* ist ein klarer Hinweis auf das Vorhandensein von *religio*. Schließlich sind auch die von Michaels unter *impressio* angeführten Aspekte vorhanden, wenn etwa sehr viele Teilnehmer von einer deutlichen Verbesserung ihrer Lebenssituation sprechen, von der Befreiung von gewissen körperlichen und psychischen Leiden (Goenka von Migräne, viele andere von Kopfschmerzen, Stresssymptomen und Depressionen) oder einem besseren Umgang mit den Schwierigkeiten des Alltags. Stärker noch zeigt sich dieser Aspekt in Beschreibungen der ausgeströmten Liebe und des Mitleids am letzten Tag eines Kurses.

Ähnlich ließe sich am Beispiel von anderen Ritualdefinitionen zeigen, dass Vipassanā-Kurse metasprachlich als Rituale bzw. Ritualkomplexe bezeichnet werden können. So ist es beispielsweise problemlos möglich, die von Jan Snoek vorgeschlagenen polythetischen Kriterien zur Definition von rituellem Verhalten, Ritus, Zeremonie und Ritual anzuwenden. Er stellt eine polythetische Definition von rituellem Verhalten vor, auf der die Definitionen der anderen Begriffe beruhen, die ihrerseits aufeinander aufbauen. Ritus sei „die Ausführung einer unteilbaren Einheit rituellen Verhaltens", Zeremonie eine „Folge von ein oder mehr Riten [...]". „Ritual" wird als die Vorschrift für die Ausführung einer bestimmten Zeremonie verstanden (Snoek 2006:13–14). In Bezug auf die Vipassanā-Kurse kann man durchaus von Sequenzen rituellen Verhaltens sprechen, und auch Rituale im Sinne von Vorschriften für die Durchführung solcher Sequenzen (Kurse) sind beobachtbar.

Auch die Zugehörigkeit zum Buddhismus lässt sich mit einem metasprachlichen Verständnis aufzeigen, wenn man allein den Bezug auf den Buddha als nicht hinterfragbare und nicht hinterfragte Autorität[36] betrachtet, ebenso die Betonung des *dhamma* und zahlreicher zentraler Elemente der buddhistischen Lehren. Stark an eine religiöse Bewegung — hier in einem umgangssprachlichen Sinn verstanden — gemahnt auch der ausgeprägte Anspruch, allein die richtige Methode und die richtige Interpretation des *dhamma* zu lehren und zu vertreten,

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[36] Diesen Bezug betrachtet Hubert Seiwert in seinem aufschlussreichen Aufsatz über die „Identität von Religionen" als wesentliches Kriterium der Zugehörigkeit zum Buddhismus (Seiwert 1986:6–7).

während der traditionelle Buddhismus diesen mit seinen Interpretationen und institutionalisierten Lehren verfälscht habe. Kurz: Es ist metasprachlich ohne Weiteres möglich, hier von „Ritual" und von einem Teil des Buddhismus als „Religion" zu sprechen.

Was aber ist mit dieser Aussage gewonnen? Zunächst gelangt man nur über einen vorgeformten Ritual- und Religionsbegriff zu der Erkenntnis, dass in dieser Hinsicht bei der Vipassanā-Bewegung scheinbare, erklärungsbedürftige Widersprüche auftreten. Die Frage nach dem Woher? und Wozu? der so häufig auftretenden Polemik gegen die Verwendung solcher Begriffe stellt sich dadurch deutlich schärfer. Dazu ist jedoch nicht zwangsläufig ein ausgefeilter *wissenschaftlicher* Ritualbegriff notwendig. Es genügt ein umgangssprachliches Verständnis, zumal der Bezug auf den Begriff schon durch seine spezifische — wenn auch ablehnende — Verwendung in der Vipassanā-Bewegung selbst deutlich gegeben ist. Zusätzlich scheint es vielmehr, dass die Widersprüche nicht in der Argumentation der Bewegung selbst stecken, sondern erst durch das Herantragen eines anderen — wissenschaftlichen oder umgangssprachlichen — Ritualbegriffs hervorgebracht werden. Die Frage, die dieser Aufsatz stellt, ist also zunächst nur aufgrund eines spezifischen, von dem der Bewegung selbst deutlich abweichenden, umgangs- oder metasprachlichen Verständnis des Begriffs Ritual überhaupt entstanden.

Ein zweiter Zweck metasprachlicher Begriffe kann sein, dass erst durch sie die Möglichkeit zum Vergleichen[37] geschaffen wird. Indem einzelnen Phänomenen große Teile ihrer Individualität genommen werden, wird es möglich, sie neben andere Phänomene zu stellen und mit diesen eben in Bezug auf die vorher definitorisch ausgeschlossenen konkreten Unterschiede zu vergleichen. Ordnet man also die Vipassanā-Bewegung den buddhistischen religiösen Bewegungen und ihre Praxis den Ritualkomplexen zu, so wird es möglich, sie mit anderen buddhistischen Bewegungen und anderen Ritualkomplexen zu vergleichen und im Zuge dessen Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten festzustellen. Als Ergebnis eines solchen deduktiven Vergleichs[38] kann

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[37] Einführend zum Vergleich in der Religionswissenschaft vgl. z. B. Hock (2002:71–76).

[38] Hock (2002:73–74): „Die Phänomene werden nach Prinzipien zusammengestellt, die [...] von [...] grundsätzlich ‚sachfremden' Kategorien der Klassifikation abgeleitet sind. [...] In diesem Fall gehe ich von einer bestimmten Theorie aus und ordne die Vielfalt der religiösen Erscheinungsformen nach gewissen Kategorien."

am Ende auch stehen, dass sich die Einordnung unter die wissenschaftliche Kategorie als nicht tragfähig erweist. Allerdings muss man bei einem derartigen Vorgehen mit in Betracht ziehen, dass die untersuchte Bewegung ablehnend gegenüber der wissenschaftlichen Zuordnung stehen kann.

Die Benutzung eines metasprachlichen Begriffs „Ritual" in Bezug auf den Sonderfall Vipassanā wird eben dadurch in Frage gestellt, dass die Protagonisten der Bewegung das Wort nicht nur selbst nicht verwenden, sondern im Gegenteil den Begriff sogar benutzen, um sich klar gegen ihn abzusetzen und seiner Verwendbarkeit zu widersprechen. Welche Berechtigung könnte also eine Aussage des Typs „Nach meinen Kriterien ist das, was dort betrieben wird, aber doch ein Ritual" haben? Es kann der religionswissenschaftlichen Forschung nicht darum gehen, *objektsprachliche Äußerungen* — und mit solchen haben wir es hier zu tun — in Bezug auf ihren Inhalt oder *Wahrheitsgehalt* in Frage zu stellen. Auch wenn zentrale Begriffe unserer eigenen religionswissenschaftlichen Terminologie betroffen sind, sind wir doch auch hier zu dem verpflichtet, was ich „methodologische Indifferenz" nenne. Die Anwendung einer metasprachlichen Gebrauchsweise der Begriffe stellt hier nur einen scheinbaren Ausweg dar, da allein diese Unterscheidung für die Untersuchten keine Bedeutung hat, und wissenschaftliche Aussagen daher diskursiv als auf der gleichen Ebene liegend betrachtet werden wie die eigene Abgrenzung. Viel interessanter als die scheinbar offensichtliche Frage nach der „Ritualität" der Vipassanā-Meditation scheint daher das Woher? und Warum? der polemischen Abgrenzung. Welche Notwendigkeit besteht eigentlich dafür? Aus welchen historischen Debatten speist sie sich? Offenbar versucht man doch, bei Anhängern wie Außenseitern dem Eindruck entgegen zu wirken, es handle sich um rituelles Handeln; und zumindest unter Außenseitern erreicht man mit der ständig wiederholten Betonung dieser so fundamentalen Nicht-Identität scheinbar das Gegenteil, wie häufige Nachfragen in Interviews bezeugen. Dies führt wiederum zu einer Verstärkung dieser Debatte, da auf (kritische) Nachfragen immer Wiederholungen der gleichen Aussagen folgen, die damit perpetuiert werden.

Ritualkritik und Ritualdiskurs

Ich verstehe daher die strikte und explizite Ablehnung des Ritualbegriffs durch die Protagonisten der Vipassanā-Bewegung als eine diskursive Strategie in einem öffentlichen Ritualdiskurs, dessen Facetten im Folgenden näher zu beschreiben sein werden.

   Einen Ansatzpunkt für die Beantwortung der Frage nach dem Warum? der Polemik gegen die Verwendung des Ritualbegriffs bietet Burckhard Dückers Analyse der Begriffe Ritus und Ritual im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch (Dücker 2004). Der oben beschriebene Gebrauch der Termini in der Vipassanā-Bewegung in Verbindung mit Wörtern wie „blind", „auf Gehorsam und Glauben beruhend" oder „inhaltsleer" verweist geradezu auf den von Dücker beschriebenen Diskurs. Anhand der Untersuchung verschiedener Verwendungsfelder dieser Begriffe (Medien, Kunst, Religion, Politik) stellt er fest, dass

> [...] Ritual in der öffentlichen Sprache der Medien vor allem für Handlungssequenzen verwendet [wird], die als defizient und veränderungsbedürftig bewertet werden. Mit diesem Begriff werden Gegenpositionen signalisiert und aufgebaut. Hinter Ritual verbirgt sich der Vorwurf leerlaufender Wiederholung, der Verwaltung des Stillstands, mangelnder Effektivität (es passiert nichts) und fehlender situationsbezogener Handlungsmöglichkeit, weil die Akteure an vorgegebene, eingeschliffene Handlungsstrukturen gebunden seien. (Dücker 2004:250)

Die Ursprünge dieser „negativen Konnotationen", nach denen Dücker leider nicht fragt, sind in der Entwicklung des Ritualdiskurses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert zu suchen. Dieser beeinflusste nicht nur den öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch, sondern auch in nicht geringem Maße die Wissenschaften, die sich mit Ritual(en) befassen.

> Zu negativ war der Begriff „Ritual" besetzt, und die Beschäftigung mit Ritualen wurde eher als Last empfunden. Rituale galten als „äußerlich" und wurden gegenüber der „inneren Haltung", dem Glauben oder Gebet, abgewertet. Rituale waren etwas für die anderen, die „Wilden" oder „Primitiven". Rituale galten als konservativ, die Tradition bewahrend und eben nicht fortschrittlich. Rituale galten als starr, rigide, stereotyp oder unveränderlich. (Michaels 2007:5)[39]

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[39] Vgl. auch Platvoet (2006), der die Entwicklung wissenschaftlicher Ritualbegriffe im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert nachzeichnet.

Schon im Verlaufe des 19. Jahrhunderts machte sich diese Begriffsverwendung auch im religiösen Feld selbst bemerkbar, als sich neu gegründete und etablierte Bewegungen — beispielsweise der in den 1870er Jahren in Agra und dem Punjab etablierte Rādhāsoāmī Satsaṅ[40] — explizit *nicht* als religiös oder mit Ritualen befasst bezeichnet wissen wollten, sondern sich und ihre Lehre als Wissenschaft oder Technik auffassten.[41] In diesen Diskurs sind die Äußerungen der Vipassanā-Bewegung ebenfalls einzuordnen. Dies gilt umso mehr, als Ledi Sayadaw, der als einer der wichtigsten Vorgänger S. N. Goenkas am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts gelten muss, in enger Verbindung mit den Buddhisten und Buddhismusforschern seiner Zeit stand. So hatte er beispielsweise Kontakt mit dem Mitbegründer der Pali Text Society, Thomas W. Rhys-Davids, und seiner Gattin. Diese Tatsache wird heute als besonderes Kennzeichen der Authentizität der Interpretation buddhistischer Lehren gern zitiert:

> It is a matter of great pleasure to know the early association of Myanma [sic!] learned Sayadaws and scholars with the Society — in its noble task of translating the Tipitaka into English. Their learning and enthusiastic support were freely made available to the Society. Mrs. Rhys Davids was fondly called 'London Devi' by the illustrious Ledi Sayadaw for her frequent references to him for expositions on knotty problems she had encountered in her translation of Pitaka especially *Abhidhamma.* (Lay 1998; Hervorhebungen im Original)

Ledi Sayadaw war auf diesem Wege auch an der Entstehung des Pali-English Dictionary sowie der Übersetzung des *Abhidhamma* ins Englische beteiligt. Gleichzeitig war dadurch eine Verbindung zur Theosophischen Gesellschaft, die die Entwicklung eines globalen Religionsdiskurses im 19. Jahrhundert maßgeblich beeinflusste,[42] sowie zu den buddhistischen Reformbemühungen in Sri Lanka unter dem Anagārika Dharmapāla hergestellt. 1903 wurde unter Einfluss des aus England stammenden Mönches Ānanda Metteya in Rangoon die internationale buddhistische Gesellschaft Buddhasāsana Samāgama gegründet. Ānanda Metteya

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[40] Dazu beispielsweise Juergensmeyer (1991:5–6, 220–222).

[41] Zum Diskurs über das Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Religion im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert vgl. Bergunder (2005:560–566). Zur Entwicklung der Religionswissenschaft in diesem Diskurs vgl. Kippenberg (1997).

[42] Vgl. dazu auch Bergunder (2005) und Sharf (1995, besonders 252–253).

(eigentlich Allan Bennet McGregor, 1872–1923) war zunächst Theosoph gewesen, hatte sich dann dem Buddhismus zugewandt, wurde in Ceylon und Burma ausgebildet und schließlich dort 1902 zum ersten europäischen Mitglied des Sangha ordiniert. (Bechert 2000b:340–341). In Ledi Sayadaws Lebenszeit fällt auch die Gründung der Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) 1906 in Rangoon nach dem Vorbild der seit 1898 bestehenden ceylonesischen YMBA (Bechert 2000a:174). Diese Verbindungen, die auch unter Ledi Sayadaws Schülern weiter bestanden, haben dazu beigetragen, dass (religions-)wissenschaftliche Topoi auch in burmesischen buddhistischen Kreisen Fuß fassten und Verbreitung fanden, darunter nicht zuletzt ein spezifisches Verständnis von Religion und Ritual, wie es gerade unter den Buddhismusforschern des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts gängig war. „Der Buddhismus" wurde nicht nur dort, sondern auch im immer stärker werdenden Reformbuddhismus v. a. aufgrund der Pāli-Texte studiert und als eine generell anti-ritualistische Religion verstanden. Neben individualistischen und universalistischen Tendenzen und einem verstärkten Interesse an schriftlichen Quellen stehen gerade „[…] a rational or ‚instrumental' approach to Buddhist teachings, which often involved the repudiation of the ‚supernatural' or ‚magical' aspects of Buddhism, the rejection of ‚empty' ritual […]" im Mittelpunkt der Reformbemühungen (Sharf 1995:252). Dieses Verständnis hat sich gehalten und bis heute sogar noch verstärkt, wie am polemischen Ritualbegriff der heutigen Vipassanā-Bewegung deutlich zu sehen ist. Dieser ist also historisch in einem Diskurs über Religion, Ritual und Wissenschaft des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts verwurzelt, der von der weltweit agierenden Theosophischen Gesellschaft, den europäischen Wissenschaften von den Kulturen, den aufstrebenden Naturwissenschaften und den buddhistischen Reformbestrebungen in Südost- und Südasien gleichermaßen geprägt ist. In diesem diskursiven Feld verschwimmen die wissenschaftlichen Aussagen mit denen der Protagonisten religiöser Bewegungen, sie beeinflussen und bedingen sich gegenseitig. So übernimmt Goenka die gerade im Verlauf des 19. Jahrhunderts diskursbestimmende These von der Ritual-Zentriertheit des Hinduismus, wenn er wie oben zitiert zu seiner „Konversion" zu Vipassanā Stellung nimmt: „My own Hindu tradition was full of rituals and ceremonies, so to start again with another set of rituals didn't make sense."

Um die These von der Verwendung dieses Begriffs als „diskursive Strategie" nochmals klarer zu belegen, sei eine weitere Implikation erläutert: der Diskurs über Wirksamkeit, Wissenschaft und Religion als Teil des polemischen Ritualdiskurses. Wie in den obigen Zitaten zum Ritualdiskurs deutlich geworden sein sollte, ist die Wirkungslosigkeit ein zentrales Merkmal, das Ritualen im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch oft zugeschrieben wird. Dies bezieht sich in erster Linie auf Handlungen, die mit Heilung verbunden sind, und bei denen sich daher ein diskursives Feld eröffnet, in das Schulmedizin und Alternativmedizin mit eingreifen.[43]

> Ich würde in der Tat sagen, dass wir, nur indem wir das Adjektiv ‚rituell' zum Substantiv ‚Heilung' hinzufügen, den Begriff ‚Aberglaube' ins Spiel bringen und somit automatisch die Wirksamkeit des Heilens in Frage stellen. Und zwar deshalb, weil in unserem alltäglichen Sprachgebrauch Ritual genau das bedeutet: etwas, das nicht wirksam ist. [...] Dahinter steckt der Gedanke, dass wirkliche Kausalität, wirkliche Macht, wirkliche Wirksamkeit woanders liegt: in der Wirtschaft, in Gewalt, oder — im Falle des Heilens — in der Wissenschaft. (Sax 2007:213–214)

Dieser Sektor des Ritualdiskurses, der sich primär mit der Möglichkeit einer direkten Wirksamkeit auseinander setzt, spielt auch für die Interpretation des hier diskutierten Materials eine Rolle. Vipassanā beinhaltet durchaus Ideen von Heilung, wenngleich eine physische Heilung von Beschwerden sicher nicht im Vordergrund steht oder stehen soll. Trotzdem ist die Befreiung von körperlichen Beschwerden ein wichtiges Thema in den Berichten von Kursteilnehmern und Praktizierenden. So beschreibt auch Goenka selbst die Befreiung von seiner Migräne als wichtige (Neben-)Wirkung der Meditationspraxis. Freilich soll es den Teilnehmern um die Befreiung vom Leiden in einem viel größeren, buddhistischen Verständnis gehen, aber auch diese soll durch die Praxis und ihre weitere Verbreitung erreicht werden. Die polemische Abgrenzung von der Verwendung des Wortes Ritual erfüllt auch die durchaus strategische Funktion, hier die Wirksamkeit der Meditations-*Technik* zu postulieren, denn *Technik* impliziert in diesem wissenschaftszentrierten und anti-ritualistischen Diskurs Wirksamkeit, während *Ritual*

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[43] Vgl. dazu Sax (2007).

wie gezeigt für das Gegenteil steht. Es ist ein beinahe evolutionistisches Argument, wenn hier *Ritual* und *Religion* als überwunden gelten, während die *Wissenschaftlichkeit* der *Technik* den Weg zum Heil bedeutet.

Der öffentliche Ritualdiskurs ist jedoch spätestens seit den 1960er Jahren auch von einer anderen Richtung bestimmt, die mit „Esoterik", „New Age", „neue Spiritualität" und „Selbstfindung" umschrieben werden könnte.[44] Die so genannten Neuen Religiösen Bewegungen fallen darunter ebenso wie der weite Bereich des New Age. Hier wird der Ritualbegriff häufig sehr positiv gefasst. Rituale geben — so die Protagonisten — dem Einzelnen Halt, sie erlauben die Erzielung „magischer" Resultate, strukturieren den Alltag. Der Kontrast zwischen beiden Auffassungen kommt besonders prägnant im Ankündigungstext des Seminars „Spirituelle Rituale für Lebensfreude, Sinn und Heilung" im Odenwald-Institut der Karl Kübel Stiftung zum Ausdruck. Es heißt dort:

> In der westlichen Kultur werden Rituale, die irgendwann noch eine wahre Bedeutung hatten, zunehmend sinn- und wirkungslos. Jeder sensible Mensch erkennt dies und fühlt intuitiv, ob ein Ritual nur Form ist, oder authentisch. Viele traditionelle Gewohnheiten sind heute sinnentleerte Rituale [...]. Das Seminar vermittelt eine Ritual-Praxis, die weniger auf Form als wieder auf Inhalt und Ziel ausgerichtet ist. Rituale werden emotional fühlbar und körperlich erfahrbar praktiziert. [...] Es geht um eine individuell authentische, natürliche Spiritualität im Gegensatz zur aufgezwungenen Religiosität [...].[45]

Die einfache Suche nach „Ritual" in der Suchmaschine Google oder ein Gang entlang der Esoterik- und/oder Lebenshilfe-Regale in einer Buchhandlung lassen ebenfalls schnell ein großes Spektrum von positiv besetzten Ritualbegriffen deutlich werden, das hier nicht näher untersucht werden kann.[46] Die diskursive Strategie der Abgrenzung vom Ritual-

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[44] Zur Einordnung buddhistischer Lehren und Praktiken in dieses Diskursfeld, vgl. Vogd (1999).

[45] Ankündigung des Seminars „Spirituelle Rituale für Lebensfreude, Sinn und Heilung" von Dr. Dorothea Fuckert im Odenwald-Institut der Karl Kübel Stiftung. In: *Zeit und Freiraum für persönliche Entwicklung. Programm für September 2007 bis Februar 2008. Seminare für Beruf, Familie, Kommunikation und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung.* Odenwald Institut, Karl Kübel Stiftung 2007, S. 129.

[46] Verwiesen sei jedoch auf Titel wie *Die schönsten Rituale für Kinder* (Petra Kunze, Catharina Salamander) oder *Rituale — Quellen der Kraft* (Martina Kaiser) oder *Was Dir*

begriff durch die Vipassanā-Bewegung erstreckt sich jedoch, so lautet ein weiterer Teil meiner These, auch auf diese Tendenzen, was nicht zuletzt durch die oben zitierte Ablehnung „sonstiger religiöser Zeremonien — einschließlich Fasten, Abbrennen von Räucherstäbchen, Zählen von Perlen, Rezitieren von Mantras, Singen und Tanzen" sowie die Bitte um Verzicht auf Amulette und Talismane gezeigt werden kann. Dabei kommt deutlich zum Tragen, dass der Ritualbegriff, den die Bewegung in ihrer Abgrenzungsstrategie vertritt, inhaltlich demjenigen des oben kurz erläuterten polemischen öffentlichen Diskurses durchaus entspricht.

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[47] Alphabetische Liste der Websites und Zugriffsdatum; aufgelistet werden nur die Homepages, die genauen Fundstellen inkl. vollständiger URL sind in den Fußnoten zitiert.

Dislodging "Embedded" Religion:
A Brief Note on a Scholarly Trope

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Abstract

Scholars of ancient cultures are increasingly speaking of the "embeddedness" of ancient religion — arguing that the practices modern investigators group under the heading of "religion" did not compose a well-defined category in antiquity; instead, they claim that "religion was embedded" in other aspects of ancient culture. These writers use this notion of "embeddedness" to help us see that categories post-Enlightenment thinkers often regard as distinct (such as politics, economics, and religion) largely overlapped in antiquity. The trope of "embedded religion" can, however, also produce the false impression that religion is a descriptive concept rather than a redescriptive concept for ancient cultures (i.e., that there really is something "out there" in antiquity called "Roman religion" or "Mesopotamian religion," which scholars are simply describing rather than creating). By allowing this slippage between descriptive and redescriptive uses of "religion," the rhetoric of "embedded religion" exacerbates the very problem it is meant to solve.

Keywords

Roman religion, embedded religion, descriptive, redescriptive

Introduction

In their highly praised work *The Religions of Rome* (1998), Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price make the following statement about how different the modern world is from early Rome with regard to the religious sphere:

> When we look, therefore, at the way in which religion and society interacted, we do not find special institutions and activities, set aside from everyday life and

designed to pursue religious objectives; but rather a situation in which religion and its associated rituals were embedded in all institutions and activities. (Beard, North and Price 1998, vol. 1:43)[1]

Price makes a similar claim in his treatment of ancient Greeks, noting that religion "was embedded in all aspects of ancient life" (1999:89). The German idiom is identical; Jörg Rüpke writes of the "*Eingebettetsein von Religion in viele gesellchaftliche Lebensvollzüge*" in the Roman world (2001:13).[2] Indeed, describing religion as "embedded" in one or (more often) many of the social structures of the ancient world has become ubiquitous in recent years. With few exceptions, the use of such language is not reflective;[3] it has become naturalized into academic discourse on the classical and ancient Christian worlds, and it is not difficult to see why.[4] The notion of "embedded religion" highlights how ancient cultures differ from

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[1] Also see the preface to volume 2: "Religion was embedded in almost every aspect of Roman life…" (1998, vol. 2:x). That I have used these volumes to illustrate some methodological difficulties common to many recent works in no way detracts from my respect for the authors' contributions to the study of Roman culture. My comments on their volume apply mostly to their treatment of the period before the late-republican era. The authors believe that in the time of Cicero, "religion" in Rome ceased from being "embedded" and that they can from that point trace "a progression towards the isolation of 'religion' as an autonomous area of human activity, with its own rules, its own technical and professional discourse" (1998, vol. 1:150).

[2] I have not encountered the exact phrase in French. The French translation of Beard, North, and Price handles the passage cited above as follows: "…*une situation où la religion, avec l'ensemble des rites associés, se trouvait incorporée à toutes les institutions et à toutes les activités de la cite*" (*Religions de Rome*, trans. Margaret and Jean-Louis Cadoux [Paris: Picard, 2006], 60).

[3] As far as I know, two scholars have noted the trope. Douglas E. Oakman enthusiastically endorses it (2005:4–12). Andreas Bendlin has criticized the model of "embedded religion" as being inaccurate when applied to republican Rome and argued that a "market place" metaphor can provide "a more realistic image of republican Roman religion" (2000:135). It will become clear that my criticisms of the trope come from a rather different angle.

[4] To name just a few other representative instances of the trope of "embedded religion" among classicists: Harrison (2006:124); Rhodes (2006:178); Parker (1996:1–2, 2005:452); Kaizer (2002:34); Asirvatham, Pache, and Watrous (2001:xi–xii); Bremmer (1994:1–4); Beard and North (1990:7–8); and Garnsay and Saller (1987:163). Among scholars of ancient Christianity: Buell (2005:59–61); Arnal (2005:34–35); Horsley (2002:87); Nanos (2002:257, n. 89); Saldarini (2001:5, 6, 12, and 150); and Malina (1986:93 et passim).

a modern, post-Enlightenment world that typically posits sharp divides between religion and politics or religion and economics.

The use of the terminology of "embeddedness" to describe aspects of the ancient world in fact originates from the field of economic history.[5] In 1944, Karl Polanyi wrote that in early societies, the "motives and circumstances of productive activities were embedded in the general organization of society" (1944:70).[6] Through studies of ancient Mesopotamian and Greek cultures, Polanyi showed that pre-modern peoples did not distinguish "the economy" as an isolated phenomenon. He did so in order to argue that current capitalist, market liberalism, far from being inevitable, was a relatively new development. Authors writing about religion being "embedded" in ancient society use this language for a similar purpose, namely to try to dislodge anachronistic descriptions of the ancient world. In this sense, the idea of embedded religion marks a great improvement over the conceptual categories of earlier generations of scholarship that presumed that all cultures everywhere had a well-defined, autonomous sphere of life called religion. The scholars who describe religion in the ancient world as "embedded" are in my mind correct to emphasize this important difference between the ancient and modern worlds. Authors such as Beard, North, and Price have very productively used this tool to displace modernizing, Christianizing understandings of the religious practices of ancient peoples.

There is, however, a more problematic side to the rhetorical trope of embedded religion that seems to go unacknowledged by those who employ the terminology; it facilitates and masks slippage between descriptive and

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[5] A point acknowledged in Oakman (2005:5). The specific notion of embedded *religion* also probably owes a conceptual debt to Émile Durkheim (1915).

[6] Polanyi later stated the point even more clearly: "The prime reason for the absence of any concept of the economy [in ancient societies] is the difficulty of identifying the economic process under conditions where it is embedded in noneconomic institutions" (1957:71). Moses Finley's widely-read work, *The Ancient Economy*, operates in a similar conceptual framework. While Finley does not himself use this terminology, others have characterized his work in this way. For instance, in the foreword to the 1999 edition of *The Ancient Economy*, Ian Morris summarizes Finley's model as follows: "the ancients did not see economic activity as a distinct element of life. In short, the ancient economy was embedded" ([1973] 1999:xx). Other economists have interacted explicitly with Polanyi's concept of "embeddedness." For a discussion, see the Introduction (by Fred Block) to the 2001 edition of Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (2001:xxiv, n. 10).

redescriptive uses of the concept religion. Classicists and other historians of ancient cultures have chosen to use these concepts only rarely; so some unpacking is in order.[7] In the context of studying an ancient culture, a descriptive account is the historian's attempt to reproduce the classifications of the culture being studied (not the "native" viewpoint itself, but the historian's best shot at reproducing that viewpoint). A redescriptive account is the result of the historian organizing and comparing various such descriptive accounts and freely employing categories "foreign" to the culture being studied.[8] The overall rhetoric of those employing the "embedded religion" trope is almost always descriptive (that is, the authors view themselves as giving an accurate account of a culture), but I will argue that by using the designation "embedded religion," these authors undercut their own cause in significant ways.

Describing religion as "embedded" in the social structures of the ancient world implies that religion is redescriptive (natives did not recognize as a distinct sphere of activity that which most modern Westerners have regarded as religion), and yet the trope of embedded religion allows authors to speak as though religion were actually descriptive, that is, in some real way "out there" in ancient cultures, just diffused and "less recognisable in our own contemporary terms" (Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1:x). The ambiguity of this trope of embedded religion allows scholars to slide

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[7] I draw this terminology from Jonathan Z. Smith (most recently 2004:28–32) as well as Burton Mack's elaboration of Smith's suggestions (1996:256–259). Both Smith and Mack employ the terms in the context of a four-part program: description, comparison, redescription, and the rectification of categories.

[8] This kind of classification can correspond to the older terminology of emic and etic, *if* those latter terms are properly nuanced, as follows: "The emic perspective is not simply to be equated with the insider's own viewpoint . . . , [it] is the outsider's attempt to produce as faithfully as possible — in a word, to describe — the informant's own descriptions . . . . The etic perspective is the observer[s'] subsequent attempt to take the descriptive information they have already gathered and to organize, systematize, compare — in a word, to redescribe — that information in terms of a system of their own making . . ." (McCutcheon 1998:17). The emic/etic distinction does appear on occasion in scholarship on religion in antiquity. See Bremmer (1998:12), who notes that religion is an etic designation for ancient Greek culture. Jörg Rüpke also approaches this type of formulation: "To talk about 'Roman religion' is to talk about cultural practices that fit our notion of religion" (2004:194), but in the same breath he speaks of Roman authors "writing Roman religion" (2004:189).

back and forth between descriptive and redescriptive projects without ever acknowledging that they are doing so.[9]

The Applicability of Religion as an Analytical Category for Antiquity

To see this difficulty more clearly, we must cast a quick glance to recent developments in the historicizing of the category of religion. In modern conversation, both academic and popular, the word "religion" generally means[10] something like "the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods," and "a religion" generally means something like "a particular system of faith and worship."[11] The Christianizing assumptions of such definitions have not escaped the notice of most of the scholars of ancient history who employ the trope of embedded religion. Indeed, the whole idea of the components of religion being "embedded in ancient society" seeks to address this problem of an overly Christianized concept of religion. What a growing number of historians and anthropologists have recognized, and what I want to emphasize here, is that the very category of religion is itself a Christian phenomenon.[12] Even though a large number of

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[9] In a short but trenchant article, Werner Cohn described a similar problem in the study of modern "non-Western" cultures, noting that many anthropological studies contain "an error in reasoning" that "consists of an unacknowledged and apparently unrecognized switch of meaning for the term 'religion' in the middle of the argument" (1967:73).

[10] When I speak of what "religion means," I have in mind the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, as is expressed in Section I.43 of the *Philosophical Investigations*: "For a *large* class of cases — though not for all — in which we employ the word 'meaning' (*Bedeutung*) it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language (*Gebrauch in der Sprache*)" (1953 [2001]:18).

[11] I draw these definitions from *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, a dictionary of "current English." For the editorial philosophy of the dictionary, see the Preface and Introduction to the work (Pearsall 1998:vii–xviii). While the use of a standard dictionary definition may seem naive, I stress again that my interest is not whether the definition is "accurate" in corresponding to some "real thing" out there in the world; I just want to get a sense of how people *use* the word.

[12] Some classical scholars are coming to acknowledge this point as well. For example, Jason P. Davies has recently written, "It may well be that the very idea of religion as a category is in itself misinformed and simply a further legacy of Christianity" (2004:7). If we take seriously Wittgenstein's notion that the meaning of a term is in its use, we

scholars of religious studies and students of antiquity still write as though religion was a universal human characteristic, present at all times and in all cultures, this trend is changing.[13] The past few years have seen a number of studies convincingly arguing that the analytical category of religion, and the carving up of the world into different religions, is a relatively recent development that can be traced to intra-Christian debates, Enlightenment intellectuals, and colonial encounters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[14]

This trend has led some scholars to argue that the term religion ought to have a completely redescriptive use. The most forceful articulation of this kind of viewpoint is Jonathan Z. Smith's oft-quoted statement from *Imagining Religion* (1982). After observing that humans have been imagining deities for their entire history, he notes that humanity "has had only the last few centuries in which to imagine religion." He goes on to conclude: "Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy" (1982:xi).[15]

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could state the meaning of religion even more bluntly: Religion is simply something that looks sort of like modern Protestant Christianity. Many of the debates about whether this or that -ism (Confucianism, Marxism, etc.) is "really a religion" boil down to the question of whether they are sufficiently similar to modern Protestant Christianity.

[13] Even some relatively recent historians of the field of comparative religion simply assume the universality of religion. Consider these comments from the renowned historian Eric J. Sharpe: "Religion is simply *there* as an identifiable factor of human experience" (1986:318). "To *define* religion is, then, far less important than to possess the ability to *recognise* it when we come across it" (1983:47). Thus the answer to Robert Segal's incredulous rhetorical question, "Are we to believe that modern theorists have been unaware that their vocabularies are their creation and not part of the lingo of the cultures to which those vocabularies have been applied?" (2006:161) is still, in many cases, yes.

[14] See, for example, Harrison (1990); Asad (1993:27–54); Smith (2004:179–196); and Chidester (1996). For the later development of the "world religions" model that currently dominates academic and popular thought, see Masuzawa (2005). Interestingly, two scholars who view the category of religion as emerging earlier than the Enlightenment (in the fourth century C.E., though still as the result of Christian debates) both describe the process as the "disembedding" of religion. See Schwartz (2001:179 and 289) and Boyarin (2004:11, 27, and 202).

[15] Smith has elsewhere sharpened this point: "I take it we can agree that the term 'religion' is not an empirical category. It is a second-order abstraction. This changes our

The statement is provocative in the best sense of the term, but it requires some modification for application to modern cultures. Tomoko Masuzawa has perceptively noted that

> [a]s one reflects back on these consequential sentences nearly two decades later, they seem not so much an overstatement as a case of not having said enough. It lacks a necessary complementing thesis, or at least some statement of the incontrovertible fact that, much as 'religion' is an imaginative invention originating in the academy, it has thoroughly permeated and saturated our quotidian (non-academic) discourses in such a way that the reality-effect of this theoretical abstraction is not in the least confined to the life of the academy. (2000:126)

Although academics (along with colonial administrators, missionaries, native informants, and others) did participate in the invention of religion for their own purposes, people have since claimed the resulting religions as their own, thus enfleshing the category in a way that Smith's dictum seems not to acknowledge.[16]

On the other hand, this nuancing of Smith's position is decidedly *not* necessary for those who study pre-Enlightenment cultures.[17] His statement

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previous mode of discourse. While it is possible to speak of theorizing about religion in general, it is impossible to 'do it' or 'believe it' or be normative or descriptive with respect to it" (1988:233).

[16] Richard King provides an especially clear example of this phenomenon of indigenous people becoming representatives of "imagined communities" in his discussion of Vivekānanda and Hinduism (1999:93–98 and 207).

[17] Objections to this assertion usually claim that some group in antiquity can be called "a religion" in the modern sense. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, for example, appears at several points to claim that the third-century figure Mani self-consciously invented a religion out of whole cloth (1963:92–98, 128). The matter appears to me to be considerably more complicated. Both Mani's followers and outside observers in antiquity seemed to regard what modern scholarship calls "Manichaeanism" as simply a variant way of being Christian. We learn from Augustine that Mani claimed to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (*Manichaeus apostolus Iesu Christi providentia dei patris*) in the opening of his "Fundamental Epistle" (see Augustine's *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus* 5; the edition cited here is that of Joseph Zycha [1891]). The author known as Ambrosiaster regarded the Manichaeans as Christian heretics (Brown 1969:98). Furthermore, Peter Brown notes that the persecution of the Manichaeans in 287 C.E. was "a persecution of a group regarded as indistinguishable from the Christians of the Sassanian Empire" (1969:95). Similar claims are sometimes made regarding ancient Islam as a religion in the modern sense of the term, but I am skeptical here as well. Ancient Christian authors wrote of

can stand "as is" for those who are concerned with ancient cultures, for the data of the ancient historian cannot lay claim to an identity produced by scholarship.[18] Religion cannot be a descriptive category for ancient cultures.[19]

The Case of Ancient Rome

I opened with a quotation from Beard, North, and Price's volume on ancient Rome in part because Roman culture provides a good test case for the claim that religion cannot be a descriptive category for ancient cultures; Rome is arguably the ancient culture for which one could make the best case that religion existed as a descriptive category. While other ancient languages lack a term that could reasonably be thought to cover the same ground as "religion" does in a modern context, the Latin language does have the term *religio*, from which the modern term "religion" derives and some Roman authors, such as Cicero, offer discussions of *religio* that can appear intelligible in terms of the modern notion of religion. The first point, that Latin has the term *religio*, is now only rarely used to argue that ancient Rome thus had a concept of religion that matches the modern use of that term. Such a connection is rightly recognized as a misunderstanding of the relationship between

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Muslims as Christian heretics. The list of heresies attributed to the eighth-century writer John of Damascus includes "the heresy of the Ishmaelites" alongside other Christian heresies (*Liber de haeresibus* 100 in Kotter 1981). Recent studies have also challenged the traditional idea that early followers of Mohammed thought of themselves as a "religion" in the modern sense, distinct from Christianity and Judaism (Donner 2002–2003).

[18] Although one still does occasionally find an avid modern spokesperson for the noble qualities of this or that "ancient religion." See Jerzy Linderski's strangely fascinating review of Beard, North and Price, in which the author declares that "somebody must speak for Jupiter," and then himself rises to the occasion (Linderski 2000:458).

[19] Beard, North and Price see religion emerging as a category in Roman culture in the late Republican period (on this point, also see Beard 1986) in a manner similar to the way in which Keith Hopkins describes the "structural differentiation" of the Roman army, education, and law (1978:74–98). While I think that Beard, North, and Price are surely correct that a new discourse about the gods emerges in writers like Cicero, Varro, and Publius Nigidius Figulus, I question the utility of calling this new discourse "religion."

etymology and meaning. The usage of a derivative word may diverge greatly from the usage of the word from which it derived.[20] Several studies of the varying uses of the Latin *religio* have confirmed its subtle and not-so-subtle shifts in meaning over the centuries.[21]

The second point is more interesting. Some ancient discussions of the term *religio* seem at first to be readily translatable by the modern idea of religion, such as the definition provided by Cotta, the representative of Academic philosophy, in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*: "The religion (*religio*) of the Roman people comprises ritual, auspices, and the third additional division consisting of all such prophetic warnings as the interpreters of the Sybil [*sic*] or the soothsayers have derived from portents and prodigies" (3.2.5).[22] The definition appears straightforward, but some caution is in order. As Clifford Ando has helpfully noted, this statement is directly followed by a sentence that rather complicates that simple definition: "I hold that none of these *religiones* should ever be neglected…" (Ando's translation), indicating that each component (*sacra, auspicia*, and the predictions of the *haruspices*) is somehow individually itself a *religio*.[23] As Ando points out, modern translations gloss the plural *religionum* with phrases like "departments of religion" or "aspects of our religion" in order to avoid these difficult implications (2003:2). Similar usages of *religio* occur in Christian authors into the late third and early fourth century. Arnobius of Sicca claims that Christianity's enemies make wild accusations: "'You practice your wicked religions' they say, 'and rites unheard-of in the world'" (*Religiones, inquiunt,*

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20) Such shifts in meaning can be dramatic: If I say a group of people are "nice," I probably do not mean that they are ignorant, even though "nice" is derived from Latin *nescius*; see Barr (1961:107–110).

21) See Despland (1979) and Feil (1986–2001). These studies do a good job of demonstrating the changing meanings of the term from antiquity to early modernity, while earlier studies of the terms *religio, religiosus*, etc. focused almost exclusively on etymology and establishing an original meaning. See, e.g., Fowler (1908) and Wilt (1954). And, although it is "embedded" in a cumbersome theological discussion, W. C. Smith's tracing of the fortunes of the term *religio* is still very much worth reading (1963:15–50).

22) The translation that of the Loeb Classical Library by H. Rackham ([1933] 1972).

23) Livy employs the term similarly: *Numa in pace religiones instituisset…*, "in peacetime Numa had instituted *religiones*…" (1.32.5). In the Loeb Classical Library edition, B. O. Foster translates "religious practices" ([1919] 1976).

impias atque inauditos cultus terrarum in orbe tractatis).[24] Christianity is here a plural set of worship practices.[25] Arnobius employs similar terminology in a self-description when he argues that no divine power has confirmed the non-Christian "way" and that no divine power has slandered "our ways and cultic practices" (*nostris rebus et religionibus derogavit*).[26] Ernst Feil has shown that this usage of *religio* as a term for "worship practice" (rather than "system of belief") persisted until the early modern era.[27]

Another means of suggesting that religion was a descriptive category for ancient Romans involves widening the definition of religion so that Roman practices can be legitimately labeled "religion." A recent example of such an approach is the work of James B. Rives (2007). While Rives argues that it is not fitting to speak of "religions" or "a religion" in the Roman Empire, he claims that it still makes sense to speak of "religion" in the Empire. He reasons as follows in the introductory chapter:

> Most people probably use the term "religion" in everyday speech to mean something like the following: "a conception of, reverence for, and desire to please or live in harmony with some superhuman force, as expressed through specific beliefs, principles, and actions." If we understand the term in this general sense, we can readily apply it to the culture of the Roman Empire. Evidence for a conception of and a desire to please or live in harmony with some superhuman force is both abundant and varied, and implies an equally varied array of religious beliefs,

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[24] *Adversus Nationes*, 1.25. See also 2.72 for a similar use. The Latin text is that of Concetto Marchesi (1953). The translation here is that of George E. McCracken (1949).

[25] Elsewhere, however, Arnobius uses the shift from plural to singular to contrast the many ways of worshipping the gods and the one genuine way of worship established by Christ, who led Christians from *falsis religionibus* to *religionem veram* (*Adversus Nationes* 1.38; see also 2.2 and 2.72).

[26] *Adversus Nationes* 1.57, my translation. See also 2.70, where Arnobius again refers to Christians' *religiones* (*religionum nostrarum*).

[27] See Feil (1986). The term *religio* also came to be a designation for the monastic life at least as early as Salvianus of Marseilles in the fifth century; see *Ad ecclesiam* 4.1 and 4.5 in the edition of Georges Lagarrigue (1971). The plural *religiones* could refer to the various monastic orders. Thus one finds such formulations as a *monachum Cluniacensis religionis* in the *Historia Compostellana*, a narrative of the deeds of a Spanish bishop of the twelfth century (1.5.1). See the edition of Emma Falque Rey (1998). I owe this reference to the entry for *religio* in Albert Blaise's *Dictionnaire Latin-Français des Auteurs du Moyen-Age* (1975).

principles, and actions. To this extent it is easy enough to identify the topic of this book. (2007:4)

Rives' appeal to the use of the term "religion" in everyday speech is promising, but it runs into complications quite quickly. The problem arises because everyday speech is exactly where the notions "religion," "a religion," and "religions" bleed together.[28] Thus when Rives writes that "some things that many people would regard as normal elements of a religion, such a set of scriptures, a distinct clergy, or an associated moral code, are often largely or entirely lacking" in "religion" in the Roman Empire (2007:5–6), he rather undercuts his claim that religion is a useful as a descriptive characteristic of the Roman world since these qualities of "a religion" would likely also come to mind when the word "religion" (in the singular, without the indefinite article) is uttered in everyday speech. The application to the Roman world of the descriptive category of religion, then, with all of that baggage, would be misleading.

This observation points to the larger danger of attempting to redefine religion to be more inclusive — to make more general or to "loosen up" what religion means in order to claim that additional cultures "have religion."[29] Since religion is such a common and diffuse notion both in academia and popular culture, attempts at better definitions of religion can stifle communication rather than foster it by creating a multitude of competing definitions with the result that scholars using the designation can very easily talk past each other.[30]

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[28] The easy interchange of "religion," "a religion," and "religions" is visible in sources ranging from Clifford Geertz's classic essay "Religion as a Cultural System" (1973:87–125) to the entry for "Religion" in the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion accessed on 31 May 2007). Such usage is also characteristic of historians of ancient cultures. Gregory Woolf writes, "Greeks and Romans were perfectly able to conceptualise *religion* as a discrete cognitive domain. *All religions* are primarily means of making sense of the world, of mankind and of each individual worshipper's place in it, devices that offer a consistent account of the origins and workings of the cosmos and some explanations of and remedies for common misfortunes" (1997:74, my italics).

[29] Again, I emphasize that when I talk about "what religion means," I have Wittgenstein in mind. See note 10 above.

[30] In an important study of the category of "religion," Benson Saler has effectively elaborated this point: "Religion is a word that has traditional meanings for us and for the audience for which we write, and by so widening or otherwise altering what it includes, it may well cease to have much utility as a research and literary tool" (1993:157).

Before closing this section, I should take the opportunity to note one additional dimension of this discussion that perhaps explains the hesitancy to give up on the idea that religion is a descriptive category for Roman culture. For many scholars of Roman antiquity, there appears to be an important value judgment at stake in the question of whether or not Romans had religion. These concerns are often muted, but they occasionally rise to the surface. In his review of Beard, North, and Price, Jerzy Linderski labels *Religions of Rome* "a godless book," advocates instead an approach that "puts at its heart 'The religion of Rome' and not 'The religions of Rome,'" and charges the authors with neglecting popular religiosity, which he describes in terms reminiscent of Rudolf Otto or Mircea Eliade: "We are rather referring to that spontaneous, overpowering, and humble feeling of attachment to the Deity that individuals experience out of fear or gratitude. This we must not deny the Romans" (2000:462). The implication is that if the category of religion is not a native Roman designation, Roman culture is somehow belittled.[31] A similar sentiment comes across in a brief note that introduces a section of essays in the recent collection entitled *Roman Religion* (Ando 2003). Clifford Ando points out that if one judges by Christian criteria, "Roman religion was not a religion at all" (2003:20). Ando makes this statement with the feel of a *reductio ad absurdum* (we should reject the Christian criteria because *of course* Roman religion is *obviously* a religion!). I think, however, that Ando has inadvertently hit the nail on the head — if our reading of the textual and material evidence is correct, what the Romans did was not religion, at least not in the sense that the term is generally used. Ceding this point should in no way lower our opinion of the Romans; it should only reinforce the idea that Romans were different from us in this regard.

In spite of this urge to grant the Romans religion, neither the appeals to ancient discussions of the word *religio* nor an expanded definition of religion is an effective means of claiming that Romans had the modern concept of religion. Different aspects of Roman belief and practice may

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[31] This discomfort is perhaps the legacy of earlier generations of scholars who consistently compared Roman religion to Christianity, always to the benefit of the latter and detriment of the former. For a prime example of such scholarship, see the Gifford Lectures given by W. Warde Fowler (1911).

prove to be interesting comparanda with modern religions, but if we make such a collection of ancient ideas and practices and simply label it "Roman *religion*" without acknowledging that it is our own interests that collected this particular set of data together, we short circuit the interpretive process, attributing our own heuristic model to the Romans. We are now in a position to see how the trope of embedded religion helps to cause such a short circuit.

"Embedded Religion" in Action

As I mentioned above, even though a category like religion is not native and is a recent creation, it is not thereby disqualified for analytical use when discussing groups of people who might not organize themselves with that category.[32] That is to say, religion is an entirely acceptable redescriptive category, even for ancient or non-Western societies. It should, however, always be clear in such discussions that religion is indeed "our" category, and it is on exactly this point that the rhetoric of embedded religion permits and even encourages confusion: The trope of "embeddedness" is perfectly suited to obscure the difference between descriptive and redescriptive usages of "religion."

To say that religion is "embedded" in the social structures of a given culture is to admit that the evidence of that culture is not particularly well-suited to the analytical category of religion, while at the same time to assert that religion is still somehow intrinsic to the culture. The word "embedded" suggests that scholars might have to look for the components of religion in unexpected places, but it still implies a deep, enduring, and very real presence of something called "religion." In short, describing religion as embedded in the ancient world allows authors to have their cake and eat it, too.

For example, in the Preface to the first volume of *Religions of Rome*, Beard, North, and Price recognize that the Roman texts and artifacts that they treat problematize the idea of religion. They emphasize the early Roman world's "sheer difference from our own world" and note that what most modern people mean by the word "religion" is not at all

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[32] As Jonathan Z. Smith has written, "It is the very distance and difference of 'religion' as a second-order category that gives it cognitive power" (2004:208).

appropriate for describing early Rome (1998:1.x–xi).[33] Nevertheless, beginning with the first sentence of the opening chapter, the authors freely employ such phrases as "Roman religion," "religion of Rome," "religion of the Romans," and the like (not to mention the plural in the title, *Religions of Rome*).[34] Several instances of this kind of language (e.g. "Roman writers recognized that their religion was based on traditions that went back earlier than the foundation of the city itself" [1998:1.2]) leave the distinct impression that religion was indeed a native, descriptive category for the Romans.

What allows the authors to hold together these contrasting outlooks is the trope of embedded religion. By claiming that in early Rome "religion and its associated rituals were embedded in all institutions and activities" (1998:1.43), Beard, North, and Price open the door to use religion as the subject of inquiry without ever explicitly stating that they are employing their own category and not a native Roman designation. Thus they write, "We have to *re*construct early Roman religion from discussions in much later authors and from a variety of archaeological traces" (Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1:x; my italics), when in fact what they are actually doing is *constructing* early Roman religion by assembling their data according to their own (implicit, modern) notion of what religion is. That such language and presentation can generate confusion is clear from reviewers' summaries of the volumes.[35] In his review of *Religions of Rome*, James B. Rives seems to understand Beard, North, and Price as endorsing religion as a valid *descriptive* notion for Roman culture, applauding them for their "willingness to take Roman

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[33] This stress on the difference and otherness of Rome is a common feature of treatments of Roman "religion." See, e.g., Rives (2007:6–7).

[34] Even the very repetition of such phrases can add to the impression that religion is a valid descriptive category for early Rome. What Talal Asad asserts about "India" is also informative for the idea of "Roman religion": "While narrative history does not have to be teleological, it does presuppose an identity ('India,' say) that is the subject of that narrative. Even when that identity is analyzed into its heterogeneous parts (class, gender, regional divisions, etc.), what is done, surely, is to reveal its constitution, not to dissolve its unity" (1993:16–17).

[35] While it can be a bit hazardous to judge a book's clarity by the responses of reviewers, the exercise is justified here. Both these reviewers, having spent time studying at Oxford during Price's tenure there, are presumably in good positions to interpret the volume.

religion seriously on its own terms" (1998:351). Andreas Bendlin, on the other hand, appears to believe the authors are doing away with religion even as a *redescriptive* category, charging them with *failing* to employ religion as "a meta-level 'umbrella term' to describe various native practices and ideas" (2001:205). Neither of these contrasting understandings of *Religions of Rome* is a misreading because Beard, North, and Price explicitly problematize the applicability of the category of religion to Roman culture while at the same time making claims that sound like religion was indeed a descriptive category for early Romans (as noted above).[36]

The rhetoric of "embeddedness" permits scholars to pay lip service to the complications involved in the cross-cultural application of the category of religion while making only the most minimal adjustment in our vocabulary and in our conceptual theorizing about ancient cultures. "Embedded religion" allows us to weakly imply that there is no such thing as a well-defined "ancient religion" but to keep talking as though "it" existed. By allowing such easy translation, this rhetoric thus ultimately impedes communication and works against the stated purposes of authors who want to stress how *different* ancient ideas about gods and humans are from modern notions.[37]

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[36] Also note that in the preface to the second volume, the authors refer to "texts in which Roman authors self-consciously discuss their own religion" (Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 2:x). Beard, North, and Price cite as the basis of their approach to "religion" the work of Fitz John Porter Poole (1986), who advocates an "open-textured" approach to studying religion. The way that Beard, North, and Price structure their study seems to me at odds with the details of Poole's program, which appears to promote a greater awareness of the genesis of the researcher's analytical categories rather than the suppression or neglect of the origins of the researcher's categories. Incidentally, Poole also speaks of "religious phenomena" that are "embedded in wider arrays of social institutions," though his application of the phrase to modern cultures is more defensible.

[37] Such is the case with the extended quotation from Beard, North, and Price with which I opened. In the two paragraphs leading up to that statement, the authors continuously emphasize the difference between early Roman and modern conceptions of the human and divine interaction — they use the words "difference(s)" and "different" no less than five times in those few sentences — only to reinscribe the idea that Romans (like us) do indeed have a religion; it "and its associated rituals" (that were not intrinsic to the "religion"?) were just embedded in social structures.

Summary and Conclusions

While not losing sight of the advantages of the trope of embedded religion, it is important to recognize what the use of this language conceals. Describing ancient cultures with the rhetoric of embedded religion protects us from having to do the much harder (but perhaps more necessary) task of re-imagining — outside of the framework of religion — how humans and superhumans might have interacted in the ancient world.[38] I stress again that there is nothing inherently wrong with using religion as a redescriptive way of arranging the data for our own comparative purposes, *as long as we strive to make it clear that the resulting arrangement is our own* and not somehow intrinsic to, or embedded in, our evidence. If we fail to do so, we risk painting a picture of antiquity that mirrors our own culture in misleading ways. Russell McCutcheon has aptly summarized the problem:

> Just as the concepts nation or nation-state — let alone individual or citizen — are today so utterly basic, even vital, to many of our self-understandings and our ability to self-organize that we routinely cast them backward in chronological time and outward in geographic space, so too it is difficult *not* to understand, say, ancient Romans or Egyptians as having a 'religion.' After all, common sense tells us that religion is a human universal. But… there is something at stake in so easily projecting, in this case, backward in history or outward in culture our local classification, for along with its ability to organize certain sets of human behaviors comes attendant socio-political implications. By means of such projection we may be doing something more than neutrally or passively classifying the world around us; instead, by means of such classifications, we may very well be actively presenting back to ourselves the taxonomies that help to establish our own contingent and inevitably provincial social world as if their components were self-evident, natural, universal, and necessary. (2003:255)

Even if we set out to emphasize the difference between the ancient world and the modern, if we do so using the terminology of embedded religion — if we choose to speak as though there was such a thing as "ancient religion" that was embedded in ancient societies — we end up creating instead an impression of sameness between the ancient and

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[38] The task is not impossible, and the results are well worth the effort; Niek Veldhuis has taken an important step in this direction with his superb book, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship* (2004). See his especially incisive comments on this point on pp. 2–12.

the modern worlds, thereby reinforcing the idea that our own conceptual categories are universal.

There is no simple way out of this problem. On the one hand, we need to find better ways of making our descriptive accounts, better ways of talking about how humans and gods interacted in antiquity.[39] On the other hand, we need to be constantly aware of the benefits and drawbacks of the conceptual tools we use to discuss the ancient world. I hope I have made it clear that continuing to employ the trope of embedded religion will likely cause more confusion than clarity in this discussion.[40]

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[39] It is not merely a problem of replacing the word and concept of religion with another word that covers the same ground; it is not a matter of finding "a better word for it." The very problem is that there never was any "it" there to begin with.

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Review Essay

Ritual Studies and Ritual Theories: A Guide for the Perplexed

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Theorizing Ritual: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concept. Edited by Jens Krienath, Jan Snoek, Michael Stausberg. Leiden: Brill, 2006. ISBN (10) 900415342.

Birds do it. Bees do it. Rituals are common in nature. In our own lineage rituals runs rampant. Why this is so, and how best to examine human rituals, remains some of the most intriguing and contested questions facing scholarly inquiry.

The editors of this impressive collection of 35 articles (plus preface and epilogue) survey a range of contemporary and classic perspectives. In my view, the book succeeds in its aim to limn the major theoretical initiatives in this increasingly prominent interdisciplinary field. A handful of chapters in this book are of poor quality — opaque, verbose, inconsistent or uninformative. Culling these would have strengthened the volume. Moreover there are significant omissions. For example, there are no chapters devoted to rational choice theory, arguably one of the most important theoretical innovations in the past forty years. Only one chapter mentions evolutionary biology (Dorthea Baudy's "Ethology," 345–350). And though thought-provoking, Baudy nevertheless fails to engage with the latest in evolutionary theory (for example signalling theory and group selection [Irons 2001; Sosis 2004; Wilson 2002]). Yet I do not wish to overstate the book's shortcomings. These are relatively minor. Moreover on the heels of this volume the editors have published an annotated bibliography with over 400 references to recent work in the

field (see below for bibliographic details.) Yet even without its companion, there is enough excellent material in this 777-page collection to make it well worth a careful reading.

The first of five major sections of the book cover "Methodological and Meta-theoretical Issues." The term "Meta-theoretical" will appear doubly worrying to those already allergic to "theory." This worry is misplaced. The editors could equally have used the less daunting and more descriptive "foundational questions." Indeed, my hunch is that the opening section will prove *most* appealing to those most sceptical of theoretical discourse. For irrespective of your taste for theory the most *empirically* interesting materials appear in Chapter 4: "Ritual": a lexicographic survey of some related terms from an emic perspective" (37–100.) Here, Michael Stausberg (an editor) raises the question of whether analogues to the term "ritual" can be found outside the scholarly world. This is an important question. As Stausberg notices, "the modern theoretical discourse about 'rituals' tacitly starts from the premise that 'rituals' can be found in each and every society, culture, and religion" (52). We begin by assuming the term refers to something definite in the world? Yet what if the term is purely an artefact of academic discourse? For Stausberg, "An analysis of… the very mechanisms of constructing 'ritual'… could help to move beyond the Euro-American legacy of discourse about ritual" (53). Crucially, the phrase "move beyond" remains ambiguous. For placing "ritual" on all fours with a much wider cultural-linguistic context exposes it to improvement — that context might refine it. But it also exposes it to the gallows. There is no guarantee that we will want to keep "ritual" as a theoretical concept if it proves arbitrary.

Eighteen languages, living and dead, are surveyed in this chapter, ranging from Akkadian, to Chinese to Arabic to Old Norse to Greek and beyond. The verdict? It turns out that most languages have a multiplicity of terms to describe what scholars lump together under "ritual." In some languages, for example, Sanskrit, that number ranges into the hundreds or thousands. Moreover, even where aggregate concepts can be found — the Hopis for example adjust their suffixes to restrict or generalize the range of terms over a set of practices — there seems to be no instance of any naturally occurring expression approximating the meaning of the scholarly term "ritual," except of course where the language in question is populated with academics. Indeed, Armin Geertz

notes that for the Hopis, even the general term *wiimi* turns out to be more wide-ranging than "ritual," because *wiimi* also applies to everything we might want to call "religion."

The utter lack of symmetry between academic and non-academic discourse will no doubt fuel the anxieties of readers already suspicious about ritual studies as an explanatory or comparative enterprise. There is a legitimate worry whether "ritual" carves social practice at any joint — whether there are, in the end, any common objects to explain or compare with this locution. It seems to me that ethnographers and historians working within Ritual Studies who remain uncomfortable with theory must be sensitive to this question. Without an answer, it will be tough to justify these scholarly trades.

Let's explore this foundational question more closely in a moment. For now, observe two virtues of this chapter, which flow from its organization. First, the question about meaning is not one that we can answer well merely by retiring to the philosophical antechamber and meditating. Rather, it is one that gets a lot of help from careful empirical study — in this case, ethnographic and lexical studies drawing on a large sample of natural languages. The chapter therefore illustrates a methodological point about the benefits of collaboration between theorists/philosophers of language and science, on the one side, and ethnographer/histories familiar with far-ranging data, on the other. Here we find no sharp distinction between empirical and conceptual investigations (more on this in a moment.) Moreover, efficient, well-directed teams of researchers are able to enhance the precision with which we can ask such foundational questions. For few lone scholars could competently manage the linguistic virtuosity necessary to tackle such a massive survey. Stausberg and his squad were able to raise the bar of comparative understanding through coordinating their efforts thoroughly and precisely.

Returning to our question: what shall we make of the scholarly concept "ritual?" Should we despair given the demonstrable lack of connection between what scholars call "ritual" and the language of the folk? Stausberg himself concludes: "'ritual' does not constitute a trans-cultural referential unity… the conceptual category 'ritual'… is a specific modern Western tool of self-reflection and intellectual modus operandi" (98). That is, Stausberg concedes that "ritual" is indeed, fully, a scholar's invention. But Stausberg himself isn't worried about this contingency,

noting that economics works irrespective of how non-scholars speak about exchange. I take it that similar points could be made about the study of infectious disease, radiation, or plate tectonics — indeed, for any discipline where common experience is a poor guide. Here we can see that while the languages of the natural sciences are unambiguously an artefact of bourgeois North Atlantic academic culture, we may nevertheless consider them valid means for describing and explaining the world. Contingency alone cannot damage a concept. For we judge academic concepts by their fruits, not their causes.

Hardened sceptics might nevertheless press the analogy to the natural sciences, noting that it is incomplete. There is a sense in which "ritual facts" do not look anything like geological, physical, economic, or biological facts. This can be readily seen when we consider the diversity of "ritual" concepts *within* the field of ritual studies. Gunter Thomas's excellent chapter "Communication" (429–470) makes this point well. Thomas shows that some researchers conceive of ritual as language, others as an alternative to language. Notice however that it cannot be that *both* P *and* Not-P are simultaneously true. Yet because "ritual" is inherently ambiguous it is hard to how to bring evidence to bear on the question of whether ritual is a language. Indeed, the lack of conceptual uniformity among scholars over the meaning of "ritual" is a point that is born out repeatedly in this volume. Unlike "quark," "nucleotide" or "Nash equilibrium," the term "ritual" may well turn out to be inherently arbitrary. There may not be any conceptual convergence at the limit of inquiry in the terms meaning because the term does not describe a natural kind.

Shall we throw up our arms in despair? Return to the basis of Stausberg's analogy to other social sciences. It seems to me that at its most basic level, Stausberg's analogy does not turn on convergence in meaning at the limit of inquiry. Rather the point seems to be, in essence, that scholarly concepts should be assessed pragmatically, for how well they clarify or explain that to which they apply. Let us consider the fundamentally practical nature of justifying concepts with some care.

First, we can observe, as W. V. Quine did long ago, that the meaning of a theoretical term is intrinsically connected to the theory in which it appears (Quine 1964). "Electron" means nothing without the quantum theory of electrodynamics. But this holism remains true of non-scientific

disciplines. Hilary Putnam urges that we think of Wittgenstein — an Austrian — as an "American Pragmatist" (Putnam 1994). There is no fact of the matter here because "American Pragmatist" is not a natural kind — for example a subspecies of Homo sapiens ("American Pragmatist" isn't like a "Neanderthal." We can't tell from Wittgenstein's skull whether he should be grouped with James and Dewey). But Putnam's construal may nevertheless prove helpful, illuminating, or edifying. We may come to understand Wittgenstein's thought better by placing him in this new light. More generally, we can better understand why it would be a bad idea to seek to regiment conformity by bearing in mind why it would be a bad idea to regiment disciplinary monism. For all scholarly discourses are inherently partial. Without some narrowing there is simply nothing to say.

Consider a passage from Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*:

> "What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?"
> "About six inches to the mile."
> "Only six inches!" exclaimed Mein Herr. "We very soon got six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of them all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"
> "Have you used it much?" I enquired.
> "It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr: "The farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So now we use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well." (Carroll 2000 [1889])

Once we consider scholars of ritual to be mapmakers of social practice, the problem of theoretical uniformity begins to loose its hold. For maps are models, not duplicates. This partiality, surely, is a virtue. For models are useful precisely because they *ignore* features irrelevant to understanding. (We could not carry them in our pockets otherwise.) Different maps will ignore different features, and exaggerate others, for varying interests and purposes (see McElreath and Boyd 2007, ch.1).

For example, suppose we were interested in the biological roots of ritual (as I am). It would be unsurprising if our models were to employ biological theory. We might talk about "indirect reciprocity" or "cultural evolution." Our models might even become mathematical or experimental,

extracting away from common sense, as we (say) examine the habits of baboons for comparative insight. But such baboon gazing probably would not help us to understand rituals if our aim was to give "a thick description" of the Whirling Dervishes or to discuss their phenomenology or to explore colonialism and its effects. Adopting a biological stance would cause us to omit or exaggerate the wrong elements for such interests and purposes. With respect to the diversity of meanings associated with "ritual" it is critical that authors stipulate the range of social phenomena they seek to examine with this term. And they benefit readers by explicitly stating their interests and purposes, and by clarifying how these relate to their methods.

Different models — just as different maps — can safely coexist. No one holds it against chemistry that it does not address matters dealt with by evolutionary ecology. And such remains true, more generally, of disciplinary approaches to ritual study.

Notice, however, that pluralism about models does not mean that anything goes. To begin with, standards of excellence are relative to a model's interests and purposes. Even one error or omission in a subway map can make you late to the airport or place you in a terrifying neighbourhood. So we can grade models according to how well they succeed by their own aims and purposes. Moreover any model in principle remains open to revision, extension or replacement.

There is another principle we can use to judge models apart from their utility. Observe that ritual studies aims to be, in the broadest sense, a practice of non-fiction. Because all ritual models describe the same, actual world, all models must be in principle reconcilable. Chemistry is not ecology but both must be consistent. Thus, where the claims or commitments of any two models *conflict*, one or both need to be revised. Theoretical pluralism does not entail pluralistic indifference! A model that posits a mechanism that is fundamentally at odds with what we know to be true will need to be adjusted. Conceptual integration, then, must always remain possible. (In a moment, we shall examine the revisions to learning required by recent cognitive models.)

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that because models are useful for what they leave out, we can safely conclude that all models will be, in an important sense of the word, *reductive*. There will always be something omitted, as William James recognized long ago:

> Philosophy lives in words, but truth and fact well up into our lives in ways that exceed verbal formulation. There is in the living act of perception always something that glimmers and twinkles and will not be caught, and for which reflection comes too late. (James [1908] 1928:457)

I will not pursue this point further, other than to note that the standard complaint that scientific theories of human behaviour are reductive applies to any approach, including phenomenological approaches. For example, any phenomenological study will inevitably leave out much phenomenology. Again, without omission there is nothing to say, just as there are no maps without scales.

Let us return to the second section of the book, entitled: "Classical Topics Revisited." Here the editors gather historical overviews, grouped under headings such as "Ritual and Society" (U. Rao, 143–160) and "Structure, Process, Form" (T. S. Turner, 207–246). In a fascinating chapter entitled "Myth and Ritual" (101–122) Robert Segal traces the history of reflection on the relationship of these two concepts, beginning with the writings of William Robertson Smith and tracking through Tylor and Frazer down to C. Lévi-Strauss, R. Girard and Walter Burkert. Segal closes by advising that contemporary cognitive approaches to ritual should consider the cognitive aspects of mythological thinking as well. For if mythological cognition is closely related to ritual cognition — as so many observers have noticed — then ritual cannot be understood in isolation from the systems that support mythological thought.

I'm willing to back Segal's horse, which is already being played in a scattering of works (see for example Pyysiäinen [2003]). But the very fact that Segal is able to make this suggestion demonstrates the extent to which scholars from one domain — in this case philosophy/history — can speak constructively to those in another — here, cognitive scientists. Conceptual integration need not prioritise the status quo in the natural sciences. Segal's chapter shows us how it may stimulate those sciences, by offering data or observations that current approaches leave poorly explained.

Of course, the lines of communication run in two directions. For it is equally clear that enhancing the cognitive understanding of fictional and ritual thinking may bring new and unexpected understanding to historians and ethnographers. Those bridges largely remain to be built (though see Martin and Whitehouse [2004]).

The third section of the book covers "theoretical approaches." Each chapter here is devoted to a particular aspect of ritual, for example, "action," "gender," and "relationality." It was striking to me that of the ten chapters in this section, only two discussed ritual from the vantage point of the natural sciences. One of these, E. Thomas Lawson's "Cognition" (307–320) introduces readers to the cognitive approach that Segal mentions.

Before examining Lawson's claims, consider some relevant background. Philosophers since the 17th century have urged that thought must be structured by concepts and assumptions. The cognitive revolution of middle part of the 20th century regimented and formalized these insights, initially (and most notably) with respect to language. Chomsky famously urged that the gap between what children perceive and what they know (the so-called "poverty of stimulus") is so great that, with the exception of the pronunciation of words and a few grammatical settings, the knowledge of any human language must be substantially instinctive. That is, our knowledge of language is largely a feature of biological rather than cultural endowment. Indeed, for Chomsky, all languages are essentially same, with variation only at the margins. This striking claim has formed the cornerstone of generative linguistics for over fifty years. And the basic idea — that we know more than we learn — applies to many features of thought, from vision, to probabilistic inference, to folk physics, to how we interpret and predict other minds. The question Lawson raises in this chapter is whether it should also apply to ritual.

Clearly much of our knowledge or ritual is taught — indeed some rituals are so elaborate their precise orchestration and sequencing requires long training and effortful concentration to remember. Leaving this variation to the side, we can ask: how much of our understanding of ritual is implicit? Lawson urges: quite a lot. Indeed, Lawson contends that, as with language, all rituals exhibit structural elements and relationships that belie manifold, largely tacit cognitive similarities. Variation is tightly constrained by panhuman features of the mind. "It is as if the structural descriptions that the human mind was processing were a system with empty slots or envelopes just waiting to be filled with specific contents" (312).

One of the models principal claims is that the (alleged) causal effects of a ritual (for example, "reversible" or "irreversible") will always vary

pair wise with a counterintuitive agent's particular location in the structural description of the ritual. (By "counterintuitive agent" Lawson means, roughly, a god.). Thus, if the counterintuitive agent is invoked via an instrument to affect a natural agent or object, the default interpretation is that the ritual is irreversible. Otherwise, the default assumption is that it is reversible.

Lawson cites data supporting the view that no one teaches us to make these inferences. They appear to arise naturally from panhuman aspects of mind. We should not be surprised, for again, such is true of so much of linguistic knowledge. No one teaches children not to ask: "Who did John see Mary and." This utterance violates what linguists call "the coordinate structure constraint." If Lawson's data do indeed support his thesis on causation, as they seem to, then it would appear that Lawson and colleagues have indeed found a panhuman interpretative feature for human ritual cognition. (See McCauley and Lawson [2002]).

Let us grant the model. Many readers will wonder, so what? Cognospeak causes vastly many properties essential to making sense of *any particular ritual* to be obscured. For example, if we look to what is common in say, the interpretation of all circumcision practices (irreversible, surprised?) then we miss exactly *everything that is unique* to any particular tradition. Telescoping inquiry further, we miss all that is unique to any particular episode in a tradition; say the horrifying rites associated with John's pious adult conversion to Judaism. We furthermore *miss the differences* between say, the Khoisa and the Lemba practices. We thus lose any basis for comparison.

Models are incomplete, and as Carroll reminds us, this is a virtue. To some extent one's particular approach will be guided by taste, interest, and expertise. It is hardly fair to expect everyone to cheer cognitive science if their heart isn't in it — much as we do not require generative linguistics of Shakespeare scholars. But we go badly wrong in thinking that cognitive science has no bearing on work in other domains.

For example, notice that if Lawson is correct, the process of acquiring ritual knowledge is one of a triggering and shaping of understandings that agents largely *already* possess. This thesis has startling implications for developmental studies. The view that learning is acquiring — so commonly assumed among anthropologists — is unhelpful and needs to be revised (for discussion see Boyer [1994]). We do not "acquire" a ritual any

more than we acquire our lungs. On Lawson's model, transmission is a probabilistic non-linear affair, a function of how conceptual materials, variously formatted, interact with entrenched panhuman psychological architecture. Thus the dynamics of learning are far more complicated, and interesting, than the platitude "children learn from their parents" would suggest.

Indeed, Whitehouse's chapter "Transmission", which appears in the fourth section of the book ("Paradigmatic Concepts"), draws some of these conceptual threads together. Here Whitehouse summarizes his "modes theory," a model for religious cognition that combines mainstream cognitive science with ritual studies to produce a novel theory of ritual acquisition. Whitehouse portrays learning as a dynamic interaction between ritual practices that are emotionally powerful but rare, on the one hand, and those that are repetitive, routine-bound but unstimulating, on the other. The emotional events trigger a ritual agent's episodic memory system yielding vivid, detailed, autobiographical representations (in particular, knowledge of cohort). Such low frequency high arousal rituals are in what Whitehouse calls "the imagistic mode." On the other side, often repeated low arousal routines activate a ritual agent's semantic memory systems, yielding schematic, encyclopaedic, impersonal understandings (in particular, knowledge of rules.) These practices are in what Whitehouse calls "the doctrinal mode." Whitehouse urges that over time these memory effects produce stable religious commitments, interpretations and institutions. On this view, rituals combine with structural features of the human mind to cause religions, and these in turn support rituals, as each elaborates the other over time.

Though indebted to the natural sciences, neither Lawson nor Whitehouse draw on contemporary evolutionary biology for insight into the mental and cultural conditions that support and modify rituals over time. Lawson writes: "Nothing in such a capacity is a special property of the human mind/brain" (315). In my view lack of attention to biology is a mistake. For as Segal observes, most rituals are bound up with stories about the gods. The fact that these beliefs and the social practices that inspire and flow from them endure is nature's harsh economy is, from a biological perspective, utterly astonishing. Dorthea Baudy's chapter "Ethology" notices that in the rest of the biological world, ritual behaviours, and in particular, the emotional expressions they prompt and

project, serve core communicative functions. Though Baudy does not explore the recent literature on religious signalling, there is an impressive and growing body of evidence that ritual practice effectively fosters cooperative commitments in groups by enabling agents to reliably signal their social intentions to each other in ways that are hard to fake, and so hard to subvert by cheats and defectors (see Alcorta and Sosis [2005]; Bulbulia [2007]; Sosis and Ruffle [2003]). That is, the costs of religious ritual themselves function as adaptations that secure solidarity among large-scale cooperative bands. This adaptationist stance meshes nicely with Whitehouse's modes theory, for it appears that an essential biological function of religion is to convey information about whom to trust (who is one of "us" — activated through the "imagistic mode") and which norms will guide our interactions (semantic information adumbrated in law and lore — activated through the "doctrinal mode"). If the adaptationist stance proves fruitful, then it would be unsurprising if we found ritual capacities to be supported by "special" architectural features of the human/mind brain. Moreover it would be unsurprising if cultural evolution working over time generated social practices effective at triggering and shaping these features during development, and maintaining them through adulthood. Yet to consider these prospects we need to think about rituals as evolutionary strategies.

A final, fifth section to the book contains an Epilogue with one chapter by Florian Jeserich on how to use his very thorough, and organized "Indices." Jeserich makes some good points about how the indices can help readers get a feel for important figures and concepts in the field, by tracking both the frequency and diversity of author citations. For example, the 19th century Dutch scholar Cornelis P. Tiele is mentioned 88 times (high frequency) but only by one writer (zero diversity.) If we were to judge Tiele merely by his number of mentions we might mistake him for an important theorist, rather than see him for the marginal figure that his is. Hence Jeserich devises a convention for tracking both variables in the index. He also makes some larger claims about "indexical theorizing" which enables readers to understand the "internal discourse" among scholars in the field. I wasn't persuaded by these claims, however, because we cannot tell without further information whether the sampling techniques are valid and whether the sample sizes large enough to draw generalizations about a scholarly discourse as a whole.

For example the oversight of Rational Choice Theory might give the mistaken view that it is marginal. Nevertheless, the index is excellent, and it is easy to look past these methodological quibbles.

Summing it up, *Theorizing Rituals* is a fascinating work. In spite of the odd dud chapter and some important omissions, it is well-worth reading. Many of the major movers and shakers in Ritual Studies are represented: Bell, Bloch, A. Geertz, Grimes, Humphrey, Laidlaw, Lawson, Segal, Whitehouse, and others. Moreover the volume includes several lesser-known scholars who have fronted with superior work. The book's comprehensive scope and its concise articles on a range of subjects make for enlightening reading. Given its breadth and clarity, the book would function well as a textbook for advanced university courses.

Finally, it is worth noting that Brill has recently published a sister volume also edited by Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg: *Theorizing Rituals, Volume 2 Annotated Bibliography of Ritual Theory: 1966–2005* (2007) (ISBN-13 (i) 978 90 04 15343), which compiles summaries of over 400 references to volumes, collections, and articles that have structured and invigorated the field of Ritual Studies.

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Book Reviews

Asceticism and Its Critics: Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives.
Edited by Oliver Freiberger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 268 pp.,
ISBN 0195307917, $74.

The book under review focuses on criticism of asceticism, studied in different
historical contexts. In his introduction, Oliver Freiberger gives the following
working definition of asceticism: "the enduring performance of practices that
affect bodily needs for religious purposes" (6). That definition can encompass
a whole range of cultural phenomena, and the book is conceived as a com-
parative investigation. Even if the contributors addressed historically and geo-
graphically specific topics, they were asked to take into account common
questions such as: What are the arguments against asceticism? What kinds of
arguments are they? Why was such a criticism articulated? Who were the crit-
ics, and whom did they criticize? This framework allows a much more subtle
and pertinent approach than a mere juxtaposition of essays dealing with each
"religion" ("criticism of asceticism in Christianity," "in Judaism" and the like).
As Freiberger says, "[u]nlike the phenomena of the 'classical' phenomenologi-
cal school of religious studies, it is rather a discourse or a debate we are exam-
ining here" (14).

The book is organized into three sections, according to the agents of criti-
cism: Freiberger distinguishes "*extra*-ascetic criticism" (critics stemming from
outside of the ascetic context) from "*inter*-ascetic criticism" (critics stemming
from other types of ascetics), and from "*intra*-ascetic criticism" (critics stem-
ming from the ascetic context itself). Typically, contends Freiberger, agents of
extra-ascetic criticism criticize the foundations of the ascetic worldview and
practice, while agents of inter-criticism condemn other ascetics for "lacking
certain doctrinal convictions, and [practicing] a false asceticism [. . .] because
their particular practices are based on wrong suppositions." (15) Agents of
intra-asceticism "tend to advocate a rather moderate ascetic lifestyle; thus, the
common feature of their intra-ascetic criticism is the focus on the degree of
intensity of ascetic practice." (16).

The first part of the book, "Extra-ascetic criticism" begins with an essay by
Patrick Olivelle, "The Ascetic and the Domestic in Brahmanical Religiosity."

This paper first distinguishes between "Root Asceticism" (the "MS-DOS" of culture), "Cultural Asceticism" (cultural manifestations of root asceticism) and "Elite Asceticism" (extraordinary ascetic forms). It then emphasizes the ambiguity of asceticism in the Brahmanical tradition: while the tradition quite exclusively recommends a "domestic" lifestyle and harshly criticizes extreme asceticism, it also acknowledges the legitimacy of certain strands of asceticism (under, among others, the names of *śrama* and *tapas*). For Olivelle, it implies that "it is not asceticism per se that the later Brahmanical theologians are opposing" (32), but rather specific ideologies reflected in ascetic practices, like those of the Jainas and the Buddhists.

Ulrich Berner's paper, "Epicurus' Role in Controversies on Asceticism in European Religious' History," shows how the figure of Epicurus was used in Christian debates about asceticism. Jerome was criticized by Jovinian for promoting a counter-natural ascetic way of life, centred on celibacy and fasting, and dangerously close to heretical Manichaeism. In turn, Jerome criticized Jovinian for promoting an epicurean, i.e. materialist and atheistic way of life. Those arguments were still used in the 15th century: the figure of Jerome was praised for having been an ascetic in the desert, whereas other writers (Cosma Raimondi, Lorenzo Valla) reinterpreted the figure of Epicurus, considering him to be a role model. The essay successfully traces the complex history of the reinterpretation of a figure among both promoters and critics of asceticism.

The first part of the book closes with the paper of Max Deeg, "Aryan National Religion(s) and the criticism of Asceticism and Quietism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." As is well known, Aryan ideology divided world's cultures into two families: Aryan and Semites. The former is associated with a more activist, conquering and "in the world" behaviour, whereas the latter is considered to have a passive, quietist, "out of the world" attitude. Thus, according to authors such as Oldenberg, the Indian Aryans lost their Aryan character, as witness the ascetic statements of the Upaniśad. The Aryan spirit is, however, not altogether dead, and it can be reanimated by European activism — ironically, that of the British. For von Schroeder, this kind of Aryan activism was especially fertilized in Christianity. Buddhism, on the contrary, was a form of ultimate ascetic life-view. As shown convincingly by Deeg, it can be seen that "extra-ascetic" Aryan criticism targets both Indian and Catholic asceticism in order to promote Aryan values of honour, courage and activism. These ideas survived in certain neo-pagan religious groups in Germany (e.g. *Artgemeinschaft*).

The second part of the book, "Inter-ascetic criticism," begins with the contribution of Martha G. Newmann, "Disciplining the Body, Disciplining the

Will: Hypocrisy and Asceticism in Cistercian Monasticism." The essay focuses on a 13th century debate between the Cistercians and the Cathars. While both promoted some sort of asceticism, the Cistercians would typically reproach the Cathars for following a hypocritical if extreme asceticism. Moreover, they advocated a dualist worldview, in which the body was negatively viewed, consequently negating the humanity of Jesus and the reality of his crucifixion. Part of Cistercian discourses on asceticism was then to criticize the hypocrisy of the Cathars and to encourage the laity to contemplate Jesus' passion. As an example of that kind of argument, Newmann refers to Goswin's *Life of Arnulf* (13th century), which, she contends, sought to promote an anti-Cathar ideology, while reasserting at the same time social and spiritual hierarchies.

The essay of P. Schalk, "The Caiva Devaluation of Pautta and Caiṉa Asceticism in Precolonial Tamiḻakam" addresses a similar controversy in a completely different historical and geographical context: the debate on asceticism between Buddhists (Pauttas) and Jainas (Caiṉas), on one side, Shivaists (Caivas) on the other in Tamiḻakam. As evidenced in the works of Campatnar (7th century), Caivas exercised an enduring and harsh criticism of Buddhists' and Jainas' asceticism, which resulted in overtly xenophobic behaviours. Buddhists and Jains are then associated with bad behaviours: they are hypocrites, especially in their ascetic practices. But, as says Schalk, echoing Olivelle's conclusions, "Campantar does not reject *tavam* (*tapas*) in general. He only rejects what he regards as false penance, which is undomesticated or which is outside the Caiva fold." (125) Caiva anti-asceticism is thus "part of very complex xenophobia, which reinforced the anti-ascetic argument and vice versa." (128)

Isabelle Kinnard's paper, "*Imitatio Christi* in Christian Martyrdom and Asceticism: A Critical Dialogue" explores the connection between the notions of asceticism and martyrdom, which is mainly, she contends, an invention of late Antiquity Christian ascetics. Since we have no evidence about how martyr literature views asceticism, the "inter-ascetic" debate must be reconstructed. Kinnard proceeds to distinguish asceticism from martyrdom. If both are forms of *imitatio Christi*, they do not refer to the same episodes of Jesus' life: martyrdom is related to Jesus crucifixion and asceticism to Jesus' temptation in the desert. Asceticism is only voluntarily undertaken whereas martyrdom is generally depicted as not voluntary. Furthermore, "[m]artyrdom […] differs from asceticism in that it is not determined by age, class, or race" (140). Finally, Kinnard contends, martyrdom promotes a blurring of the genders, which is not to be observed in the later Christian ascetic tradition. This essay is highly thought-provoking, even if, at certain points, it tends to idealize the position of the first Christians.

The third part, "intra-ascetic" criticism, opens with the contribution of Christoph Kleine, "'The Epitome of the Ascetic Life': The Controversy over Self-Mortification and Ritual Suicide as Ascetic Practices in East Asian Buddhism." The contribution deals with criticisms of extreme ascetic behaviours, such as self-immolation, in the context of Chinese Buddhism. Such practices contrast with the moderate image of Hīnayāna Buddhism. Indeed, in his sermons, the Buddha manifestly prohibits suicide. Nevertheless, argues Kleine, suicide "fitted perfectly into the ethical program of the strand of Buddhism called 'Mahāyāna'" (157) It can be viewed as a perfect gift to the Buddha, or as self-sacrifice for the sake of living beings. Arguments defending this view are then surveyed. This essay provides a clear account of a complicated debate, paying attention to the whole complexity of the arguments at stake.

The next essay, "'I have Chosen Sickness': The Controversial Function of Sickness in Early Christian Ascetic Practice" by Andrew Crislip, leads us again to the context of early Christianity. The essay focuses on how sickness is related to asceticism. In order to explore this relation, Crislip reviews arguments for and against its extreme forms. As examples of the former, he takes the *Life of Antony* (written 356–362), attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria, which presents Anthony as experiencing extreme sufferings. Asceticism is here said to heal any kind of sickness — if not according to man, at least according to God (p. 186). Such a conception came under several criticisms. It was for instance argued that extreme suffering leads to sickness, in turn leading to the incapacity to observe the monastic rule (Basil of Cesarea), that extreme asceticism is "a symptom of demonic influence" much like gluttony (Evagrius of Pontus), or that self-control and moderation are the true characteristics of royal *askēsis*, as opposed to the *askēsis* of the enemy (Amma).

Ute Hüsken's paper, "'Gotami, Do Not Wish to Go from Home to Homelessness!': Patterns of Objections to Female Asceticism in Theravāda Buddhism," begins by an historical survey of the place of women in the canonical texts of Theravāda Buddhism. The author then examines the case of "lay nuns" in Sri Lanka, who decided to conduct an ascetic life, even without an official "ordination." Arguments for and against an official recognition stem both from the monks and nuns. Monks would typically point out that a nun has to be initiated by a senior nun. Since there is no senior Theravāda nun available, initiation is not possible. The lay nuns themselves sometimes find that being officially recognized would "formally place them below the monks" (p. 223). Hüsken finally observes that it seems that there is a resurgence of interest for female ascetic practices in "phases of [...] radical socio-religious changes" (225), as is now the case in the context of post-colonialism and globalization.

The final contribution of Oliver Freiberger, "Early Buddhism, Asceticism, and the Politics of the Middle Way," examines early Buddhist criticism and support of asceticism. Freiberger refers to three lists of practices which criticize ascetic behaviours. The first list, describing actions performed by the Buddha before his awakening, makes "the soteriological uselessness of ascetic practices" (p. 236) evident. The second list consists of practices ascribed to non-Buddhists, which include: restriction about food, clothes, and practices for mortifying the body. The third list describes *dhutaiga* practices which are sometimes not completely dismissed but considered as options rather than as obligations. That argument and other texts reinterpreting the Buddha's ascetic phase as a necessary prerequisite for awakening suggest that there were indeed ascetics inside the Buddhist movement. To explain these different attitudes towards asceticism, Freiberger distinguishes two kinds of early Buddhisms: "we are facing a struggle between Buddhists of settled monastic institutions and ascetic Buddhists performing all sorts of severe practices." (248). In the end, he interestingly sees the doctrine of the middle way as a rhetoric tool, elaborated by Buddhist redactors eager to rule out the ascetic trend of Buddhism.

Altogether, the book gathers an extremely inspiring collection of essays. The discursive approach endorsed by all the contributors provides historically accurate studies, which concurrently pay attention to more general concerns. The distinction between "extra-ascetic," "inter-ascetic" and "intra-ascetic" is heuristically useful but could inevitably be nuanced; sometimes, the groups to which the prefixes "extra," "inter" and "intra" refer are not explicitly stated by the texts, and we often lack historical information on them. Moreover, it is not always easy to distinguish ascetic from non-ascetic practices, especially if we consider the threefold distinction between root, cultural and elite asceticism proposed by Olivelle. The book nevertheless succeeds in opening new ways not only for the study of asceticism specifically but also, more generally, for promoting a sound historical approach in the comparative study of religions.

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Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others. Edited by OLAV HAMMER and KOCKU VON STUCKRAD. Leiden: Brill, 2007. 325 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-16257-0.

Polemic is more than a sharpened rhetorical exercise used to overwhelm an Other in debate. It is a tool for constructing this Other, and, more importantly, by so doing, demarcating one's self in the same process. Polemic creates boundaries, alliances and self-identification: We are *this*, not *that*. As such, polemic is a highly useful tool, complementing apologetics. And it may be used with regard to almost any issue, *creating* importance in the discourse, rather than merely reflecting an established opinion that a certain topic is central.

This is part of the theoretical argument of Olav Hammer and Kocku von Stuckrad in the introduction to *Polemical Encounters*: *Esoteric Discourse and Its Others*. It is an argument which, in its full form, is well put and which we need to be reminded of. Thus, the scrutiny by 12 authors in 13 chapters of "esoteric discourse and its others" is welcome. Not least because all the chapters in this anthology are engaging and well written, showing well-reasoned expert knowledge in their areas. Authors like, in his contribution on Adorno, the deceptively modest Steven Wasserstrom may disagree and argue that these are but "preliminary observations." For an outsider to most of the subjects, these contributions nonetheless give a wealth of information and food for thought.

Some are more general than others. Boaz Huss' article on how academic scholars of Kabbalah have taken on the role of "authorized guardians" with regard to contemporary practitioners, and the resulting delegitimizing polemic, certainly holds general interest in the way it challenges certain conceptions of our discipline. So does Wouter Hanegraaff's assertion that a "Grand Polemical Narrative" has misrepresented European religious history through a modernist, "whig history" (or "mnemohistory" (111f.), where science and theology has "othered" the esoteric. This, ironically gave birth to "occultism" when groups and individuals appropriated the view of history where the esoteric was a hidden tradition.

The authors give us fascinating contributions on specific issues that simultaneously work according to the editors' intention as "*exempla* for the complex dynamics of polemics and esotericism in western culture" (xvii). What most of the contributions do not give, however, is a lot of insight into "polemical encounters" understood as the dynamic development of self-definition between two parties involved in polemical (and less polemical) exchange. Most of the authors focus on a set of sources from one "camp" alone. To the degree that the reader meets the reactions of the party a polemic is directed

against, it is more often implicit or *en passant* than explicit or in detail. This does not lessen the value of the book or particular contributions. Its strength instead becomes the historical analysis and the focus on how polemic has been used strategically in particular cases and for specific participants in esoteric discourse.

One who *does* look at polemics from both of two opposing camps, is co-editor Olav Hammer, in a highly readable introduction to the debate between dowsers and skeptics. Dowsers and other diviners have always been ready to make positive claims about the effect and trustworthiness of their craft, and so it is no surprise that their modern apologetics frame dowsing as a "scientific" enterprise. This puts them in line for critical scrutiny and polemics from the self-proclaimed defenders of science and reason in the skeptic's movement. Hammer traces the central tropes and topics of these parties' rhetoric, and how this polemic works to call their different communities together. The social process involved is illustrated in Titus Hjelm's mostly theoretical contribution, where "mainstream" society and marginal group negotiate boundaries of what is legitimate through participation in the "claims-making arena." The theoretical tools of constructionist social problems theory that Hjelm employs, are, with their focus on rhetoric and the language of claims, well suited to complement the rhetorical focus of Hammer. In Hjelm's article, they also illustrate well the processes Finnish Wiccans went through in trying to become a registered religion.

That some articles go unmentioned here should not be taken as a slight on their quality. They are all worth reading and pondering, both as case studies and for the broader debate. *Polemical Encounters* has become both a thought-provoking and an enlightening book.

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Anthroposophie in Deutschland (Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945). By Helmut Zander. 2 vol. (vol. I: XVII + 1 à 957 pp.; vol. 2: XII + pp. 958 à 1184). Avec illustrations. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007. ISBN 978-3-525-55442-4.

La réputation scientifique de l'auteur (A.), Privatdozent à l'Université Humboldt (Berlin), était déjà bien établie, surtout depuis la parution de son ouvrage *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa* (Histoire de la transmigration des âmes en Europe ; Darmstadt : Primusverlag, 1999). Celui qui est présenté ici (*L'Anthroposophie en Allemagne [Vision théosophique du monde et pratique sociétale, 1884–1945]*) était d'autant plus attendu. Il a déjà suscité quelques réactions négatives de la part de certains membres de la Société Anthroposophique qui y voient une tentative de jeter le discrédit sur elle. Or, s'il est vrai que l'A. adopte une approche proprement scientifique, en l'occurrence historico-critique, c'est sans verser pour autant dans un hyper-réductionnisme chargé d'intentions polémiques. Il s'agit d'un travail objectif qui, de plus, constitue un apport majeur à plusieurs disciplines et spécialités – histoire des religions (en particulier, des courants ésotériques occidentaux modernes), philosophie contemporaine, histoire des idées, études germaniques –, l'A. ne manquant pas, chaque fois que l'occasion s'en présente, de replacer dans leur contexte les divers aspects du sujet annoncé dans le titre. Il est servi en cela par une rigueur méthodologique dont témoigne toute la partie introductive et que la suite ne vient pas démentir. Un appareil scientifique de toute première qualité (bibliographies, index des noms de personnes, index par matières, notes en bas de page riches en compléments d'information, etc.) vient rehausser l'intérêt de ce livre.

Il existe, certes, d'autres travaux dans lesquels analyse méticuleuse et grande érudition s'allient à d'heureuses et éclairantes synthèses, mais semblable alliage est moins courant dans des « sommes » quantitativement aussi importantes que celle-ci, laquelle, sur ce plan et sur d'autres, représente un modèle rarement égalé. Traiter d'un tel ouvrage ainsi qu'il le mériterait, reviendrait à consacrer un compte rendu spécifique à chacune des grandes sections qui le composent et dont chacune aurait pu, à elle seule, constituer une publication autonome. Elles ne sont pas pour autant juxtaposées artificiellement les unes aux autres, comme parfois lorsqu'un auteur entreprend de réunir en un volume plusieurs de ses travaux antérieurs. L'A. a préféré attendre plusieurs années – une quinzaine, semble-t-il –, jusqu'à s'estimer capable de dominer tout l'ensemble.

Une partie introductive relativement courte (chapitre 1) est suivie par une première grande partie substantielle (chapitres 2, 3 et 4). Celle-ci s'ouvre sur des exposés à caractère méthodologique (chapitre 2) consacrés, notamment, à

des notions telles que «religion minoritaire » et «ésotérisme» (le passage, pp. 16 à 24, qui porte sur cette seconde notion, paraît mériter une attention toute particulière et fera ailleurs l'objet d'un traitement spécifique par l'auteur du présent compte rendu), puis situe la Société Théosophique dans le contexte des recherches consacrées aux groupes minoritaires en Allemagne, présente l'histoire de cette S. T. hors d'Allemagne (de 1875 à 1900) – y compris les aspects du Théosophisme (entendons par là tant la S. T. proprement dite, que les enseignements prodigués par ses diverses branches) qui n'ont pas, ou fort peu, fait l'objet d'une réception dans ce pays –, enfin débouche sur une étude (chapitre 4) de la structure sociétale de la S. T. Cette étude, qui pour une bonne part repose sur des fonds documentaires jusque là inexploités, tire parti de la notion weberienne de charisme pour rattacher la notion de mouvements sociaux à l'histoire des associations, ce qui permet à l'A. d'analyser pourquoi ce courant théosophique s'est constitué, en fait, comme une manière de résoudre sa propre tension constitutive entre revendication totalisante, d'une part, et inévitable pluralisme, d'autre part. Dans ce long chapitre 4 n'apparaît guère avant la page 122 le nom de Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), évidemment personnage central de cette histoire, lequel, après sa rupture avec la S. T., entreprit en 1912 de transformer à sa manière le Théosophisme en ce qu'il appela l'Anthroposophie. Aux succès progressifs de celle-ci est dû en partie le fait qu'à partir de la fin de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale les Associations relevant du Théosophisme proprement dit ont compté beaucoup moins de représentants en Allemagne.

Pas plus qu'à propos d'autres figures marquantes (telles que Johannes Maria Verweyen, Franz Hartmann ou Gottfried von Purucker), l'A. n'a entendu présenter une biographie détaillée de Steiner, préférant renvoyer à de bonnes études déjà existantes et s'attacher plutôt à retracer la genèse et le développement de leur pensée. La genèse, pour Steiner, ce sont les années qui précèdent 1900 – son 'Idéalisme', sa lecture de Goethe et de Kant, son opposition à Nietzsche dont il est au demeurant un fervent admirateur (chapitres 5 et 6). Le développement, c'est essentiellement «l'histoire intellectuelle» de son propre théosophisme – histoire évolutive, contrastée, dont l'A. scrute (chapitres 7 et 9), sans doute plus profondément qu'on ne l'avait fait jusqu'ici, le parcours à travers l'étude chronologique des lectures et des influences subies (hindouisme, ésotérisme chrétien, littérature scientifique de vulgarisation, etc.). Du même coup, alors que précédemment (*cf. supra*, à propos des chapitres 2 à 4) il avait traité du Théosophisme sous l'angle de sa 'structure sociale', l'A. soumet ici, en de nombreuses pages, à une analyse serrée les contextes historiques et les procédés ayant permis à ce courant de se construire (construction d'une 'Tradition', anti-historicisme foncier, etc.). Quant à Steiner, sa christologie

déjà présente depuis les débuts de son parcours philosophico-religeux s'est précisée tandis qu'il oeuvrait encore au sein de la S. T. ; de fait, c'est pour une bonne part sa réaction à l'encontre de la conception que cette Société se faisait du christianisme, qui lui a permis d'élaborer peu à peu les fondements de son Anthroposophie (chapitre 8).

Cette progressive prise de distance assumée par Steiner s'est accompagnée d'une réflexion portant sur une des caractéristiques fondamentales du Théosophisme ; à savoir, la prétention à la scientificité: pour celui-ci il s'agissait en l'occurrence de substituer à la certitude herméneutique un savoir empirique, en privilégiant la valeur de la dimension « objective », « suprasensible », de la connaissance, à l'encontre de la philosophie matérialiste. L'A. montre comment Steiner, tout en souscrivant à ce programme dans son ensemble, l'a infléchi selon sa propre orientation en matière d'empirisme religieux, notamment en puisant une partie de son inspiration dans le rosicrucisme du XVIIème siècle et dans la *Naturphilosophie* romantique (chapitre 9). Toutefois, il n'a intégré ceux-ci qu'après sa séparation définitive d'avec la S. T., c'est-à-dire après 1913 – encore ne fut-ce que superficiellement, semble-t-il (*cf.* 9.4.4). Quant à Goethe, Steiner en avait, avant 1900, interprété la philosophie surtout dans la perspective d'une « Erkenntnistheorie » à caractère néokantien. De fait, en dépit de sa marginalisation progressive au sein de la S. T., il a tenté de fournir à celle-ci un apport original, qui du même coup lui a servi à construire son propre système. Cet apport a consisté surtout en l'élaboration de moyens d'expression esthétiques susceptibles de rendre empiriquement sensible cette dimension objective et suprasensible évoquée plus haut. Et cela, par un recours à ce que les rites maçonniques lui semblaient contenir de pertinent à cet égard, et au moins tout autant par l'accent mis sur les ressources que peuvent offrir la pratique théâtrale, l'architecture et l'eurythmie – questions auxquelles l'A. consacre de longs développements (chapitres 10 à 13, soit les premiers du vol. II).

La Première Guerre mondiale eut pour effet, en Allemagne, de transférer le Théosophisme à la sphère du politique et d'en faire une sorte de pratique ouverte à une audience beaucoup plus large. Or, dans quelle mesure celui-ci était-il prêt à jouer un rôle dans la République de Weimar à ses débuts, et quels buts poursuivit-il alors ? L'A. tente de répondre à ces questions. Elles se posent aussi à propos de l'Anthroposophie steinerienne, dont il étudie la théorie sociale 'tripartite' en la plaçant dans le contexte du pluralisme démocratique naissant. Ainsi, comment une connaissance de type suprasensible, par nature non « démocratisable », peut-elle se concilier avec un système politique reposant sur le principe selon lequel les décisions dépendent de la majorité des citoyens (chapitre 14) ? Poussant son enquête plus avant, jusqu'à l'époque

actuelle, il analyse ceux des secteurs de l'Anthroposophie qui contribuent à conférer à celle-ci l'image que le public s'en fait généralement et qui, à cet égard, l'emportent de loin sur la théorie 'tripartite' de Steiner. Il s'agit principalement de la pédagogie (les fameuses « écoles steineriennes » [Waldorfschulen]), ainsi que de la médecine et de l'agriculture (biologico-dynamique) dites anthroposophiques (chapitres 15 et 17). A cela vient s'ajouter la « Société Chrétienne » (Christengemeinschaft), une des Sociétés issues de la Société Anthroposophique qui mettent l'accent sur la pratique (chapitre 18).

Enfin, l'A. ouvre des perspectives sur divers aspects du Théosophisme en Allemagne, notamment sur l'action que des Sociétés théosophiques ont pu exercer au sein de la société en général, particulièrement en matière de groupes minoritaires, et indique des pistes de recherche et de réflexion à l'intention des chercheurs qui viendront après lui (chapitre 19). De fait, comme il le dit lui-même (t. I, page 9), malgré ses dimensions son travail ne prétend pas à l'exhaustivité ; il est bien plutôt destiné à susciter, à faciliter, de nouvelles enquêtes. On pourrait, ajoute-t-il, interpréter son importance quantitative elle-même comme le signe d'un tournant culturel qualitativement important dans une Europe qui commence à réinterroger, à la lumière des minorités, sa culture hégémonique imprégnée du christianisme des grandes Eglises.

Embrasser un domaine aussi vaste, même en lui consacrant autant de pages, ne pouvait évidemment manquer, ici ou là, de laisser sur leur faim certains lecteurs particulièrement attentifs. Par exemple, à l'hermétiste chrétien Valentin Tomberg, figure pourtant majeure parmi les dissidents de la S. A ., guère plus d'une page est consacrée ; et les articles de Michael Mutschalle qui depuis les années 1990 portent sur la pensée de Steiner, sont passés sous silence (notons au passage que Mutschalle en a repris l'essentiel dans son ouvrage *Studien zur Anthroposophie*, paru en 2007). A propos du mot « théosophie », ni au début, ni dans le corps de l'ouvrage (notamment à propos de l'usage que Steiner en fait parfois), l'A. ne rappelle la spécificité du courant ésotérique chrétien du même nom (environ de 1610 à 1850) – en l'occurrence, en quoi il se distingue absolument du Théosophisme. La gigantesque et magnifique 'Bibliographie générale' (pp. 1723 à 1834), vrai pain béni pour les chercheurs, donne les références complètes de tous les livres et articles cités dans les notes, mais l'index des noms contient seulement ceux qui apparaissent dans le texte même, de sorte qu'à moins de chercher parfois longtemps on échoue à trouver à quelles pages l'A. convoque dans les notes ces noms qui apparaissent dans la Bibliographie. Soulevons aussi une question d'ordre plus général: dans son légitime souci de faire ressortir la dette de Steiner et de la S. A. vis-à-vis du Théosophisme, l'A. nous paraît avoir par trop insisté sur cet aspect, donnant ainsi parfois l'impression que celle-là pourrait, *in fine*, n'être qu'une sorte

d'excroissance de celle-ci – malgré la présence, dans l'ouvrage, de documents qui permettraient au contraire de mettre davantage l'accent sur ce qui fait véritablement la spécificité de la S. A.

Ces remarques ne présentent évidemment qu'un intérêt secondaire, eu égard aux qualités soulignées précédemment, lesquelles font de cet *opus magnum*, et pour longtemps, la référence obligée. Il se doit de figurer d'ores et déjà dans toute bonne bibliothèque, tant générale que spécialisée.

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Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination. By Susan Ashbrook Harvey. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2006. ISBN 13: 976-0-520-24147-3.

In ancient cultures, smell and scent played an important role in religious contexts: smell for example was omnipresent in sacrifices and rites, or certain fragrances were considered associated with specific deities, to name just two instances. Christianity evolved out of that ancient context. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, in her book *Scenting Salvation*, thus takes this as a starting point to investigate the stance that early Christianity took regarding the olfactory sense. She distinguishes between two moments in which scent played a significant role: firstly, fragrances have carried important meaning on a metaphorical level, and, secondly, in the performance of rituals. Scent, via our olfactory sense, is thereby wedded to physicalness. From the start, Ashbrook Harvey combines the layer of smell with religious messages in other embodiments, thereby demonstrating how complex the relationship is between such divergent communication media. As scent is an ephemeral phenomenon, and hardly any fragrances have remained from ancient times, the exploration of smell in early Christianity has to ensue from other sources. Ashbrook Harvey's analysis relies mainly on the textual tradition, and she has examined a great bulk of sources dealing with the olfactory sense in early Christianity. Once she makes also a reference to images: The cover illustration shows a medieval codex from the British museum: here, the onlookers were depicted as holding their noses when witnessing the resurrection of Lazarus, a hint at the prevailing stench of a decomposing carcass. Aroused by this example, a hunger for more insights into iconographic sources of (early) Christian times is nourished, but not stilled.

Ashbrook Harvey structured the table of contents thematically, yet she combines her synchronic approach with a diachronic view. The first chapter provides a contextualisation of early Christianity and its scent culture. The author hereby contrasts the different olfactory aspects in Christendom with its surrounding Graeco-Roman trends, but also with the Jewish tradition. The chapter starts with texts about the burning of the martyr Polycarp, followed by a short discussion of the ancient tradition of sacrifice. Next, a treatment of the everyday world of scent is presented, before the chapter closes on fragrances associated to deities. Ashbrook Harvey hereby traces the shifting stance early Christendom took regarding the significance of scent. Starting off with a certain demureness towards creating their own scent culture, smell soon turns into an important element of the separate identity. Mainly two aspects prevailing in the environment of early Christianity were responsible for that

shift in attitude: on the one hand, incense as a sign and characterisation of sacrifice, thus an ancient way of communication between the secular and the divine sphere, and on the other hand, perfume as an indicator of divine presence and a symbol of benediction.

The second chapter focuses on the development of Christian rituals in the forth and fifth century and on the significance therein of the body. The human body is getting redefined in these rituals, the body receives a new identity. Ashbrook Harvey reveals the significant role scents, their use and reception, adopt in such context. Insights can be gained regarding the change in meaning of the ritual and of the body in early Christianity. The chapter is rounded off by an interesting excursion on offerings of burning essences in the Syrian *Transitus Mariae*, an uncanonised report about Maria's passing. By means of this textual example, the author illustrates to which extent and effect the burning of essences was ingrained in Christian practice.

The third chapter explores how the Christian agreement came into place, that the Christian body in his experiences can yield knowledge about God. Christianity affiliated ancient philosophical-epistemological concepts about the meaning of sense perception and combined it with biblical messages and theological thought. Especially the olfactory sense carries an important role. By virtue of its invisibility and inaudibility, but perceptibility, scent — or the lack thereof — was regarded as a sign of divine presence or absence. Scents in a way had the ability to travel between the secular and the divine domain. The olfactory sense became linked to Christian identity, to the moral stance of a person, and the human relation to God. This is shown by the numerous early Christian pieces of evidence — and the author presents an elaborate selection — employing olfactory imagery, especially in the areas of hymnography and Christian sermons.

In the fourth chapter, Asbrook Harvey focuses on early Christian asceticism and its then contemporary discourses. Asceticism is a form of devoutness outside of clerical structure and institutional habits; at its centre lies the individual in his or her social and political embedding. The author shows that Christian thinkers often employed the terminology of asceticism to describe sensory contexts. By means of models of asceticism, the adequate use of senses is being presented and the proper location for certain perceptions announced. And again, it is the olfactory sense that plays an important role in this new orientation of Christian perception.

In the fifth chapter, this coherence gets further elaborated by means of the example of bad smell. Particularly in the early Christian understanding of stench, we can decipher the complexity of Christian scent culture and its close link to practised asceticism. Agreeable smell was associated with the divine,

unpleasant smell with the secular sphere. Bad scents pointed towards, for example, mortality, moral decay, or towards the presence of Satan. However, especially in practised asceticism, bad smell was also a means for self-chastisement and a sign of renunciation of materialism, as the author points out with different examples at the end of the chapter.

The sixth and last chapter attends the observation that in early Christian texts, stench and scents were often related to eschatological questions. Thus, the future is often viewed in connection with smell: the stench of hell stands in stark contrast to the sweet fragrances of heaven. Besides, quite a few texts raise the question whether the resurrected body is a sensory active body or not.

Ashbrook Harvey's book offers a tremendously interesting insight into the scent culture of an ancient religious system. Moreover, she demonstrates how to understand something so ephemeral as scents of a bygone culture, and she proves the importance of investigating the olfactory tradition, a so far often neglected area in reconstructions of ancient religious systems. The author analysed a range of early Christian literary sources which makes the book an exciting and entertaining read, giving the bygone world new life. The book inspires further thinking: The question, for example, how the different religious media that Ashbrook Harvey broached upon interact and, for example, how images and smell relate; or one can follow further the diachronic thread taken up by the author and explore the meaning of the olfactory sense in other periods of Christendom; or one could compare Ashbrook Harvey's observations with other religious symbol systems.

To summarise, *Scenting Salvation* is an interesting book offering considerable information and exciting theses, and inspires further thinking. It will appeal to readers intrigued by the olfactory sense or to readers willing to explore a new aspect of ancient Christendom.

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Sectarianism in Qumran: A Cross-Cultural Perspective. By Eyal Regev (Religion and Society 45), Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007 (xviii + 438 pp.). ISBN 978-3-11-019332-9 (cloth). € 98.00/$ 132.30.

Eyal Regev is senior lecturer at the Martin Szusz Department of Land of Israel Studies at Bar Ilan University. He is a specialist of the sociology of Second Temple Jewish movements and his doctoral dissertation, "The Sadducean Halakhah and the Sadducees Influence on Social and Religious Life," completed in 1999, was published under the title *The Sadducees and Their Halakhah: Religion and Society in the Second Temple Period* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005; see the positive evaluations of Sagit Mor, in *Review of Biblical Literature* 12 [2006], 280–284, and James C. VanderKam, in *Henoch* 29 [2007], 397–400). Over the past few years Regev has published a series of insightful essays on the sectarian features of the Qumran community that produced the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls. Since the discovery of its libraries, between 1947 and 1956, this group of rigorists has generally been identified as an outcome of the Essene movement, one of the Second Temple Jewish "schools" described by Josephus and other Greco-Roman authors. Because of the translation of the technical Greek term *hairesis* used by Josephus as "sect," it has been widely (and impressionistically) assumed that all of these movements (the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots) were more or less sectarian. It is only recently, after some preliminary attempts (particularly those made by Anthony J. Saldarini and Albert I. Baumgarten), that a more sophisticated sociological understanding of sectarianism has begun to be applied to the surviving literary evidence. This new approach is mainly grounded in (1) the typology of the different sectarian responses ("conversionist," "revolutionist," "introversionist," "manipulationist," "thaumaturgical," "spiritualistic," "reformist," and "utopian") to a world globally perceived as evil which was developed by Bryan R. Wilson, a specialist of contemporary New Religious Movements, and (2) the distinction between "sects," which emerge through a process of schism, and "cults," being the result of an innovation, proposed by sociologists Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge. Regev clearly belongs to this new trend of research and the present volume constitutes the synthesis of his studies to date.

After a methodological "Introduction: From Scrolls to Sects" (1–30), the main body of the monograph is subdivided into three parts: the first is devoted to the "Sectarian Ideologies in Qumran" (31–196); the second is about the issue of "Related Movements: 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Essenes" (197–266), while the third provides "A Comparative Study of Sectarianism: The Qumran Sects and the Anabaptists, Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, Puritans, Quakers and Shakers" (267–376). This is followed by a final chapter summarizing

Regev's "Conclusions" (377–387). The book also includes a list of abbreviations (389), a bibliography (391–425), and a general index (427–438).

Regev's approach is grounded in a sociological — "functional," as he calls it — reading of ancient texts. He assumes that the variety of documents found on the shelves of Qumran libraries betrays the existence of at least two different communities: the "*yahad* group" of the *Community Rule* (1QS; 4Q255–264; 5Q11), the *Hodayot* (1QH; 1Q35; 4Q427–432), the *Pesharim* (1QpHab; 1Q14–16; 3Q4; 4Q161–173; 5Q10), and other sectarian texts; and the "Damascus Covenant" of the *Damascus Document* (CD[ab]; 4Q266–273; 5Q12; 6Q15). Both groups displayed, at the same time, strong introversionist and revolutionist features that clearly identify them as sectarian. Evidence for this can be found in the mechanisms of social and religious separateness that they used (42–50) and the eschatological and messianic beliefs that they held (58–72). Regev also aptly stresses the social implications of their extremely rigorous doctrine of atonement (73–78) and the special nature of revelation at Qumran (81–86). In his opinion, heavenly revelations were "a fundamental factor that influenced the very creation of the Qumran sects" (81). Since they are described as past experiences in the *Damascus Document*, he reaches the conclusion that, in comparison to the *yahad* group, originally established by the Teacher of Righteousness, the Damascus Covenant was a later and more routinized kind of movement (89–93). Examination of the social structures and organizational patterns described in the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document* (163–196) seems to confirm such an inference. Thus, according to Regev the highly centralized organization of the Damascus Covenant was quite different from the relatively democratic *yahad* assembly. "The organization and structure of the two sects, and the relationship between their penal codes, and the fact that CD 20 refers to the *yahad* as a historical group all lead to the conclusion that the *yahad* preceded the Damascus Covenant. The Covenant was not a direct continuation or adaptation of the *yahad*, but an entirely different movement, which adopted and extensively revised certain precepts and concepts from the *yahad*" (192–193).

Regev presents some significant arguments in favor of the priority of the *Community Rule* (previously argued by Józef T. Milik, Frank Moore Cross, or Colin G. Kruse) that all of the specialists who address this delicate issue in the future will need to take into account. In the meantime, one can read Hilary Evans Kapfer's rejoinder, "The Relationship between the Damascus Document and the Community Rule: Attitudes toward the Temple as a Test Case," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 14 (2007), 152–177.

Regev also provides an accurate and useful analysis of the social realities embedded in some illustrious pre-sectarian or early sectarian texts, i.e.,

1 Enoch (199–217), *Jubilees* (219–241), and the *Halakhic Letter* (4QMMT = 4Q394–399) (97–132) that he dates to the days of Jonathan Maccabaeus, "probably not before the late 150's" (241). He rightly describes *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* in terms of early documents produced by certain reformist groups "seeking public influence" (262) that contributed to the emergence of the *yahad* group, even if, in his opinion, this does not mean that they belonged to an "Essene parent movement" from which the Qumran sectarians eventually separated (200 and 263–264, criticizing the "Groningen" and the "Enochic/Essene" hypotheses of Florentino García Martínez and Gabriele Boccaccini). Actually, Regev believes that the Essenes of Philo, Josephus, and Pliny were a late and extremely introversionist "outgrowth" of the Qumran movement (243–266). Admittedly, he makes a strong point that the Essenes were celibate, whereas, according to the so-called *Ritual of Marriage* (4Q502) and the *Damascus Document*, women and children were probably at home among the Qumran sectarians (252–259 and 301–333). However, one wonders if those Essenes were the late outcome of the former *yahad*, the Damascus Covenant, or both sectarian movements. In other words, there are still too many alternative interpretations of the suggested historical evolution of these three closely related sectarian movements.

Finally, one of the strengths of Regev's monograph is found at the end in the comparative section. It is true that Joel Marcus, "Modern and Ancient Jewish Apocalypticism," *The Journal of Religion* 76 (1996), 1–27, had already drawn an interesting parallel between the ancient Qumran sectarians and their Habad or Lubavitcher contemporary fellows. However, there is no doubt that Regev's comparison with modern protestant sects is extremely enlightening and helpful in placing the unique experience of the people of Qumran into a much more general social and religious perspective. Thus, for example, the extraordinary predisposition to mysticism that they shared only with Shakers (351–376), which is apparently "unattested in the sources and scholarship of the other sects" Regev has studied (386), clearly betrays their commitment "to overcome this tension [with the world already acknowledged by Gershom Scholem and Martha Himmelfarb] stemming from the separation between God and man, and create new religious values corresponding through interpretation of the traditional ones. The stronger the sect's spiritual alienation and the more intensive its spiritual creativity, the greater the probability that the sect will develop mystical thinking and mystical experience" (374). Regev makes a significant contribution to the study of Qumran mysticism that will aptly supplement, from a cross-cultural and sociological perspective, the excellent synthesis of Philip Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* (London and New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2006).

Sadly enough, the book contains some typos (as, e.g., the amusing "Shemi-nihazah" [201], "angleomorphism" [361–362, three times], and "interover-sionist" [373]), lapses (as, e.g., the mistaken reference to "the outset of this article" instead of "chapter" [194]), inaccuracies (e.g., read "1QS 7:**10**" and "**lô** bemishpat 'for no cause' instead of '**not** according to the law'" [283, n. 57]), and occasional repetitions (thus, e.g., the sentence "a world of demons who continue to plague humanity, leading them to sin and afflicting them with illness [15:8–16:1]" is repeated twice on the same page [202]) too trivial to be enumerated at length. A little more problematic are a few omissions in the bibliography. Thus, "Eshel 1996" (102, n. 21) probably refers to Hanan Eshel, "4QMMT and the History of the Hasmonean Period," in John Kam-pen and Moshe J. Bernstein (eds.), *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 53–65, while "Douglas 1999" (365, n. 51) stands for Michael C. Douglas, "The Teacher Hymn Hypothesis Revisited: New Data for an Old Crux," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 6 (1999), 239–266. As for Elizabeth Isichei's essay on the Quakers (405), it was published in Bryan R. Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism: Organization and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 182–212. Some subtitles (e.g., those of "Boccaccini 2005," "Douglas 1966," or "Schiffman 1994a") are also missing. The two publications of "Grossman 2002" were not differentiated and "Callaway 1993" was actually published in 1996. One should also note that Francis Schmidt's seminal book, *La pensée du Temple, de Jérusalem à Qoumrân. Identité et lien social dans le judaïsme ancien* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), was translated into English as *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism* (trans. J. Edward Crowley; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). These are the kind of minor and inadvertent errors that betray both the fatigue of the author (but everybody knows that *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*) and the lack of attention on the part of the eventual (if any) copy editors.

Regardless, in spite of such trivial and excusable faults *Sectarianism in Qumran* brilliantly demonstrates that Eyal Regev is an excellent specialist of the Sociology of Religion and Second Temple Judaism, who is perfectly able to carry out historical research in a postmodern, comparative manner. The goal of the author "that those who study Qumran will better understand the scrolls after reading this book, and that those interested in sectarianism in general […] will benefit from new insights about the sectarian phenomenon" (22), has been successfully met and all of the specialists interested in these areas who read his monograph will also profit from reading Kåre Sigvald Fuglseth's dissertation, *Johannine Sectarianism in Perspective: A Sociological, Historical, and Comparative Analysis of Temple and Social Relationships in the Gospel of John,*

Philo, and Qumran (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), and the collection of essays (including articles written by Regev himself and the present reviewer) published by David J. Chalcraft (ed.), *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances* (London: Equinox, 2007).

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The Demise of Adam in the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*: The Symbolic Politics of Death and Re-Burial in the Islamic "Stories of the Prophets"[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores how death and burial narratives — particularly those associated with Adam, the paradigmatic first human being, in the Islamic religious literature known as *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* ("stories of the [Biblical] prophets") — relate to the discursive processes through which religious communities articulate lines of inclusion and exclusion in the formation of their collective identities. In conversation with Katherine Verdery (*The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*), who examines reburials of political figures in Eastern Europe following the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union, this paper argues that Islamic narratives regarding the death and burial of biblical figures like Adam serve to re-appropriate, re-situate, and re-define boundaries of identity and difference both among Muslims (e.g. male/public vs. female/private; Sunni vs. Shiʿa; ʿ*ālim* (scholar) vs. populist preacher) and between Muslims and non-Muslim monotheists, Jews and Christians, principally. Grounding the discussion, empirically, are a series of close analyses of various renditions of the story of Adam's demise as found in a range of mostly Sunni *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* materials. From these analyses, the paper offers an expanded understanding of how religious communities, specifically, develop multiple and competing claims in an effort to "monopolize the practices associated with death" (Verdery).

Studies addressing Adam in the Qurʾan and the extra-Qurʾanic corpus, including the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (the "Stories of the Prophets"), have focused on his role as a prototype for Sunni notions of *khilāfa* (Vadet 1975; Kister 1988, 1993). Other studies have examined the Adam narrative as an example of the centrality of myth in Islamic religious texts (Chipman 2001). Still others have surveyed Shiʿi presentations of the Adam story, relating their distinctive narrative features to the struggle among proponents of the competing Sunni and Shiʿi factions to define Islamic orthopraxy (Kohlberg 1980). Although these studies mention the details of Adam's demise, none systematically explores the implications of Adam's death and burial for authority, identity, and difference among Muslims and between Muslims and the *ahl al-kitāb* ("People of the Book," i.e. Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims). Careful analysis of narratives about bodily demise and interment, however, can provide crucial insight into how religious and political narratives intersect in the formation of collective imaginaries, Muslim and others. By focusing on the death and burial of the first paradigmatic biblical patriarch and "prophet," Adam namely, this essay opens up new questions not only for the study of Islamic religious texts like the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* but also for the comparative analysis of group formation — particularly its symbolic aspects — within religious milieus.

Narratives focusing on the demise and (re)interment of "founders" — figures associated with the genesis of a group — lend themselves particularly well to questions of group formation and transformation. As Katherine Verdery observes: "Dead bodies … have properties that make them particularly effective political symbols…. They are … excellent means for accumulating something essential to political transformation: symbolic capital" (Verdery 1999:33). Their effectiveness in this regard lies in how they connect existential concerns with the transcendent claims of imagined collective entities — a religion, a nation, and so on. Verdery explains that corpses,

> … evoke the awe, uncertainty, and fear associated with "cosmic" concerns, such as the meaning of life and death. For human beings, death is the quintessential cos-

mic issue, one that brings us all face to face with ultimate questions about what it means to be — and to stop being — human, about where we have come from and where we are going. For this reason, corpses lend themselves particularly well to politics in times of major upheaval.... Moreover, religions monopolize the practices associated with death, including both formal notions of burial and the "folk superstitions" that all the major faiths so skillfully integrated into their rituals. Politics around a reburied corpse thus benefits from the aura of sanctity the corpse is presumed to bear, and from the implicit suggestion that a reburial (re)sacralizes the political order represented by those who carry it out (Verdery 1999:31–32)

Verdery goes on to assert that the materiality of dead bodies and the multiplicity of meanings that can be attached to them help account for their political salience. A body, in its "there-ness," materializes or "localizes" collective values symbolically in a way that abstract concepts like "patriotism," "civil society," "Christendom," or "the *umma*" (the trans-regional, trans-ethnic Islamic community) cannot. "Bodies," she writes, "have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present" (Verdery 1999:27). Corpses, however, are not by themselves significant. Rather, what matters is how individuals and groups construe death. Corpses acquire meaning only because they serve so well as mirrors of the diverse existential concerns and claims of a society. In the discourses and practices surrounding death, thus, lie clues to understanding how collectivities construe and contest identity and difference, authority and cohesion.

In applying Verdery's ideas to Islamic retellings of the death and burial of biblical patriarchs and prophets, several interesting questions arise: First, to what extent is the materiality of bodies a critical dimension of their political meaning? The biblical patriarchs are mythical figures whose bodies are not easily locatable or localizable in any concrete form. They are protean, susceptible to multiple localizations. The absence of a verifiable corpse, that is, lends itself to diverse appropriations and instantiations. Verdery does qualify her assertions about materiality, noting how relics of a saint, for example, can multiple to the point of absurdity: "If one added together all the relics of St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, one would get rather more than the material remains of one dead man" (Verdery 1999:28). What matters, she says, is not the actual body, per se, but rather the beliefs of individuals in the relationship of a relic to a body. This is a critical point. In Islamic

discussions about the death and burial of the patriarchs and prophets, the dying bodies and corpses of mythical "founding fathers" serve, like relics, as totemic externalizations of the collective consciousness. They are metonyms of the *umma*'s body politic. Unlike Eastern Europe post-1989, the territorial and temporal focus of Verdery's analysis, these mythical bodies are unavailable for actual, physical exhumation and reburial. Instead, the Islamic materials, in revising the biblical narratives, perform a type of imaginative re-interment that root competing conceptions of Muslim identity within the mythical origins of monotheism.

Second, what do discourses, such as those found in the Islamic materials, tell us about "how religions monopolize the practices associated with death"? What, in particular, do they tell us about the process through which heterodox/heteroprax orientations, "superstitions" in Verdery's terms, become assimilated in the formation of this monopoly? Verdery never fully explores this issue. Granted, her focus is on post-Soviet struggles over national identity and what they tell us about "the sacred" as a dimension of modern politics.[2] Still, Verdery's observation concerning the monopoly that religions have had on interpretations and practices surrounding death beckons further discussion. Through what symbolic or discursive processes do religions appropriate death and burial practices and the meanings embedded within them? How does this act of appropriation occur, and with what effects, in settings in which diverse groups compete to monopolize interpretation of shared narratives? How does this process relate to struggles over authority both within and among religious groups?

This essay explores these questions by focusing on a particular genre of Islamic religious literature, the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (roughly, "the stories of the [Biblical] prophets"). In the periods during which the *umma* (Islamic relgio-political community) first emerged, two issues featured prominently: a) the validity of Islamic assertions relative to Christian and Jewish ones; and b) the question of who speaks authoritatively for

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[2] Verdery specifically wishes to "re-enchant" social scientific conceptions of the political. In so doing, she is advocating for a hermeneutical and comparative approach that, to her mind, better accounts for the revival of religious nationalisms in the late twentieth century than do the reigning rational-choice approaches that have guided much of the recent research in the fields of political science and sociology.

the Muslims. The story of Adam's death recounted in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* lends itself particularly well to an exploration of these issues. The discussion to follow a) describes the historical context within which this literature emerged, showing its relationship to internecine Muslim debates as well as its connections with, and implications for, the Muslim-Christian dynamic; b) analyzes presentations of Adam's death and burial in several examples of the *qiṣaṣ* literature, ranging from scholarly to popular preaching uses of this material; and finally c) probes the implications of Adam's death and burial narratives for the articulation of pre-modern Islamic conceptions of identity.

Historical and Discursive Context

The genre of medieval Islamic religious literature known as *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* originated in the exhortations and story-telling of the *quṣṣāṣ*, a diverse group of pious individuals who sought, either on their own initiative or as agents of particular religious and political factions, including the Caliph, to reinforce faith and practice in Muslim garrison towns like al-Fusṭāṭ and Basra. Early on, one function of these preachers was to recite the Qurʾan, recall the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, and recount the tales of the pre-Islamic prophets to fortify the morale of Muslim soldiers during the wars of conquest and occupation. Another of their functions was to spread *daʿwa*, literally, an "invitation" to faith but, in this context, perhaps more accurately understood as propaganda proclaiming the virtues and superiority of Islam, among the conquered populations. In many instances, the *quṣṣāṣ* included individuals known for possessing in-depth knowledge of languages and the Qurʾan. Goldziher notes as long as the *quṣṣāṣ* devoted their preaching altruistically to the spread of religious beliefs the guardians of political and theological orthodoxy tolerated and even encouraged their unofficial, or semi-official, efforts (Goldziher 1967–1971, 2:152–53).

Eventually, however, the *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars) began to view the *quṣṣāṣ* as a threat to their authority. The preachers had developed as a distinct class of popularizing intellectuals who drew large audiences (MacDonald, *EI¹*, s.v. "Ḳiṣṣa," 1043; see also Goldziher 1967–1971, 2:152–53). The tone of the descriptions of the "sermonizers" in the sources accordingly

shifted by the second/eighth century[3] from positive, or at least not hostile, to condemnatory. Pellat notes this shift paralleled the institutionalization and regulation of preaching under the Abbasids. (The push to institutionalize actually occurred much earlier under Muʿawiya, the first Umayyad caliph.) The repetition from one source to the next of the prohibitions placed on the *quṣṣāṣ*, however, "would lead one to believe that [the attempts at regulation] were ineffective; even if they were banished from the mosques, the 'sermonisers' in fact enjoyed great success with the uneducated masses, and gathered round them a more attentive, more eager and often denser audience than that of the *fuḳahāʾ* and other scholars, who tended to adopt a disdainful attitude towards them, more especially as in any discussion they were sure of carrying the day, thanks to their easy flow of speech" (Pellat, *EI²,* s.v. "Ḳiṣṣa," 734).

The ambivalent and ambiguous status of the *quṣṣāṣ* in the sources reveals underlying tensions related to struggles for power, authority, and knowledge in the period during which the core political and legal institutions were forming. Berkey (2001:22–23) cautions, however: "In the first Islamic century the *quṣṣāṣ* operated at the center of the process by which the nascent religion defined itself, as the lines of political and legal institutions and authority only gradually came into focus." They "functioned as part of the network of individuals among whom Islamic law slowly took shape, answering questions concerning ritual and right behavior posed to them by members of their audiences." The Umayyad caliphs, attempting to harness the popularity of the preachers, created "the office of the *qāṣṣ*" (storyteller), thereby fusing religious instruction with the political concern to reinforce Islamic solidarity — and loyalty to the Umayyads — among Muslims within the empire. The point to be made here, however, is simply that the popular preachers were central to the forming of Islamic orthopraxy and politics during the early centuries.

It was precisely their popularity that eventually led the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and, initially, mystics (Sufis), too, to level biting criticisms of

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[3] References to dates are given first according to the Islamic lunar calendar, in which year zero corresponds with the Prophet Muhammad's pilgrimage to Medina in 622 C.E., and then according to the Gregorian system, now referred to generally as the "Common Era" (C.E.).

the *quṣṣāṣ*. (Often, the scholars were themselves mystics.) The scholars objected to what they perceived as a lack of public decorum among the preachers — "buffoonery" reflected poorly on the entire class of scholars and expounders of the Qur'anic text — as well as the existence in their ranks of "comic imposters" who undermined piety and respect for learning and the authority of the scholars within the populace (Berkey 2001:27). Mystics, for their part, condemned the *quṣṣāṣ* for detracting from the serious effort required to attain enlightenment. Ironically, Sufi mystics would later appropriate the role of storytellers and consequently become the targets of the scholars opposed to the displays of unbridled enthusiasm in their mass meetings or the inordinate stress on love in their public teaching (Berkey 2001:27–28).

At the center of the scholars's criticism, however, was the accusation that the *quṣṣāṣ* undermined the foundations of authoritative knowledge by fabricating or passing on faulty *aḥadīth* (sing. *ḥadīth*, sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad). Both the scholars and storytellers established the authenticity of their teaching through the method of *isnād* — the linking of a saying or story to a chain of transmitters. The strongest, most accepted *isnād*s were those featuring transmitters known for their sound learning and piety and verifiable ties to the Prophet Muhammad. In excoriating the *quṣṣāṣ* for propagating fake *ḥadīths*, the scholars sought to monopolize control over the production of sacred knowledge and its dissemination to the masses. Preservation of authentic knowledge and proper instruction of the populace were, argued the scholars, directly linked to the stability and success of the *umma*, the embodiment and bearer of God's will in the world. Forgery and innovation could only lead to *fitna* (sedition). Those who produced and propounded false knowledge were enemies within the "House of Islam," a threat far worse than the one posed by the non-Muslim world existing beyond the borders of the lands where Islam held sway (Berkey 2001:28–30). Their teaching created the possibility for dissension on questions of practice and doctrine, much as had occurred in the early spasms of violence that marked the succession struggles after the Prophet's death.

Equally pernicious and threatening for social order, in the view of some scholars, was the undermining of status hierarchies — specifically, the "god-given" gender order — in the gatherings of the *quṣṣāṣ*. Women

and men would mix together in the storyteller's audiences, a practice that made the likes of Ibn al-Hajj tremble "at the thought of the 'rending of the sacred [boundary separating men and women]' (*hatk al-ḥarīm*)" (Berkey 2001:31). Others like Ibn Jawzi decried the erosion of decorum. The commoners in the audiences of *quṣṣāṣ* "shouted aloud . . . as if seized by an ecstatic experience (*wajd*): female members of the audience might 'cry out like the crying of a pregnant woman at the time of her delivery. At times they even throw off their outer garment and stand up'" (Berkey 2001:31). Perhaps more threatening than the mixing of the sexes and the behavior in the audiences was the fact that women might also serve as storytellers (Berkey 2001:32).

Central to all of this criticism was, again, the concern to control the production and propagation of sacred knowledge. The actual textual sources and thematic content that informed popular storytelling was, significantly, not at issue. Popular preachers and scholars, alike, made the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* materials, however hotly contested, central to their teaching. Both groups, as well, drew heavily on Jewish and Christian narratives to fill gaps in Qur'anic accounts of biblical figures and events and to verify Qur'anic claims and predictions. Effectively, Muslim commentators — preachers and scholars — were simply taking their cues from the midrashic character of the Qur'an itself. They were doing so, moreover, in the context of polemical debates with the "People of the Book." In retelling the Biblical stories, the *quṣṣāṣ* and the *ʿulamāʾ* were engaged not only in attempting, in competition with one another, to make sense of the Qur'an for a new generation of Muslims but also to demonstrate, in the face of Christian and Jewish criticism, the legitimacy of Islam as inheritor and true, indeed, truest manifestation of the original divine writ given to the prophets all the way back to Adam (Gaudeul 1984; Lambden 2006). Later, the scholars would begin to cast a critical eye on the use of biblical materials as Muslims increasingly drew starker lines of contrast between Islam and Judaism and Christianity. Even so, the biblical narratives of these competing communities continued to serve an important exegetical role albeit with various restrictions (Berkey 2001:41; Lambden 2006).

Thematically, the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* literature addressed many of the same concerns that appear in scholarly commentaries on the Qur'an. That this parallel emerged is hardly surprising given the centrality of

biblical narratives to informal preaching and formal Qurʾanic exegesis, alike. Both types of discourse sought to flesh out Qurʾanic claims and root Islamic practices at the origins of monotheism. One topic of great interest was creation (Berkey 2001:42). The Qurʾanic account of the creation, like many such references to biblical events and figures, is laconic and disconnected. The Qurʾan, it seems, assumes the listener is already familiar with the details of the given biblical narrative and so a brief reference to a story will suffice to remind him or her of its contents. Later commentators sought to fill in the Qurʾanic ellipses for new generations of Muslims by integrating details from the Jewish and Christian materials. Concerning the story of creation, for example, commentators turned understandably to biblical accounts of Adam and Eve. The story of the first humans served also as an important source for locating the Prophet Muhammad within the chain of messengers sent by God to humanity (Berkey 2001:43). In the Muslim reading of these biblical accounts, figures like Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus become prophets bearing messages much in the same manner in which Muhammad brought the Qurʾan. These other prophets then served as prototypes for Muhammad even as the bearer of the Qurʾan provided the mold for an Islamic recasting of the biblical figures. Intrinsic to this operation was the process of integrating Qurʾanic and *ḥadīth* materials with the biblical materials, including rabbinic legends and extra-canonical Christian texts. What subsequently emerged from this process was a distinctly "Islamo-biblical" imagination (Lambden 2006).

Perhaps the most prevalent theme in this Islamic imaginary as it took form within the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* literature had to do with the end of human life and the certainty of judgment and consignment either to paradise or hellfire (Berkey 2001:46ff.). Preachers went out of their way to assure their listeners of God's mercy even as the threat of judgment and damnation served implicitly as warning against careless disobedience. Suffering was as omnipresent a reality in the medieval Islamic world as it was in European Christendom in that same period. Not surprisingly, the preaching literature in both communities explained suffering as the consequence of a failure to adhere to divine commandments; similarly, the preachers, Muslim and Christian, promised release from suffering to the truly repentant who renounced desire for bliss

in this world and instead embraced their trials as a test of their faith (Berkey 2001:48–49; Hanska 2002:64–80, 116–142). Muslim preachers like al-Hurayfish "drew heavily on tales of the pre-Islamic prophets, such as Adam, who, according to one tale, worshiped and wept on Jabal al-Hind for one hundred years in expiation for his sins, and David, who, in al-Hurayfish's account, functions as a model of penitence" (Berkey 2001:48). Al-Hurayfish followed up such references with stories of Muslim mystics like "Ibrahim al-Adham (d. probably 161/777–78), who wept at the recollection of lost opportunities to fast, pray, and worship. The tears of the pious were meant to deflect eschatological punishment" (Berkey 2001:49).

As noted, intrinsic to the storytelling enterprise was the larger project of disseminating Islamic dispositions within the wider populace. Apocalyptic themes, even as they reflected a preoccupation with suffering rooted in the precariousness of medieval life, served also to reinforce a concern with living according to the divinely mandated precepts as expounded by those learned in such matters, whether the preachers or the scholars. Right living, which guaranteed bliss in paradise, was after all the antidote to the present mortal life of suffering. For the scholars and preachers, who saw themselves, albeit in competition with one another, as sources of authentic knowledge and exemplars of correct practice for the masses and rulers, alike, the eschatological consequences of improper behavior provided moral sanction for securing obedience to the model of piety they propounded.

Animating the concern of scholars and preachers to institute right practice among elites and masses was yet another axis of tension, this one involving the struggle between Sunni and Shiʿi claims. This tension apparently influenced one of the best-known Sunni compilations of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* materials, the collection attributed to al-Kisaʾi, about whom little of substance can be verified. Vadet (1975) argues that the earliest manuscripts of Al-Kisaʾi's text trace back to the eleventh century C.E., an era marked by attempts to restore Sunnism following the Fatimid imposition of Shiʿism in Egypt. According to Vadet, the preaching literature collected in the text of al-Kisaʾi reflects the effort to counter Shiʿi propaganda by casting figures like Adam as ideal prototypes not only of the Prophet Muhammad but also of the Abbasid caliphs. The virtues attributed to Adam, as God's caliph, are those of the caliphs

themselves who serve a similar function as guarantors of God's divine writ entrusted to Muhammad and his successors.

In direct contrast, Twelver Shiʿi portrayals of Adam serve to anchor Shiʿi interpretations of doctrine and practice at the origins of the universe in an attempt to counter Sunni claims. The will Adam is said to have bequeathed to Shith (Seth), his son, becomes, in Shiʿi interpretation, the very content of the special books (*suḥuf*) containing knowledge to which only the Shiʿi imams have access (Kohlberg 1980:42). Like the imams, moreover, Seth receives knowledge through the illumination of the divine light, the origins of which, it is said, precede human creation by some two millennia (Kohlberg 1980:42). All future generations of humanity, additionally, when assembled at ʿArafa, acknowledge not only God's divinity and Muhammad's prophethood, as stipulated in the Islamic declaration of faith (the *shahāda*), but also the *wilāya* (authority, guardianship) of Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and, according to the Shiʿa, the rightful successor to Muhammad as leader of the *umma* (Kohlberg 1980:44). Significantly, the narrative of Cain and Abel becomes an extended analogy and prototype for the betrayal of Ali and his family at the hands of Muʿawiya and his (Sunni) successors (Kohlberg 1980:46). Also, God grants forgiveness to Adam on the day of ʿAshuraʾ, the day on which Husayn, Ali's son and successor, was martyred at the hands of Yazid, Muʿawiya's successor (Kohlberg 1980:57). Shiʿi burial rites — the utterances of five *takbīrāt*, or, declarations of God's greatness, over the grave as opposed to the four stipulated in Sunni practice; the custom of *takhḍīr* ("making green"), which involves placing freshly cut tree branches inside the burial site; and the flattening of the ground over the grave — are portrayed as originating with Adam's death and burial. Kohlberg notes parallels in these details, especially with regard to trees, in Christian and Jewish stories about Adam's demise (Kohlberg 1980:63–64). Finally, Shiʿi texts have Noah transporting Adam's corpse not to Mecca but to Najaf. It is at Najaf, too, that Noah builds a coffin for Ali and then has his own remains interred (Kohlberg 1980:58).

Adam's reburial at Najaf calls to mind Verdery's observation that "reburial (re)sacralizes the political order represented by those who carry it out" (Verdery 1999:32). In the pre-modern Islamic period, the political order was also a religious one. Reburials of biblical figures likes

Adam (and Eve) in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* re-contour the intertextual terrain of monotheistic imagination in a distinctly Islamic (Sunni or Shiʿi) pattern. They are acts of symbolic assimilation and revision that integrate and reposition competing heterodox/heteroprax discourses and practices, in this case, Jewish and Christian as well as competing Islamic ones, as part of a larger project of elaborating the Qurʾanic imaginary. This elaboration, and the questions they raise concerning theodicy, cosmology, and the articulation of an Islamic ideal of prophetic piety and comportment, occurs inextricably alongside the extension and institutionalization of Muslim imperial power and cultural hegemony. It is to an analysis of the symbolic dynamics of this elaboration process that the discussion now turns. The sections that follow analyze a range of Sunni texts stretching from the third/ninth to the seventh/thirteenth centuries. These texts are grouped roughly into two types: scholarly literature and popular preaching. The choice of texts reflects the centrality of the compilations to the corpus of *tafsīr* and *qiṣaṣ* materials. The typological approach focuses attention on the disjunctions and continuities between scholarly and popular uses of these materials. The development of the *qiṣaṣ* genre and its appropriation across time and place are, correspondingly, deemphasized.

Scholarly Literature

Ibn Qutayba

Abu Muhammad ʿAbdullah Ibn Qutayba was one of the great Sunni writers of the third/ninth century.[4] Born in Kufa in 213/828 in what is today Iraq, he died sixty-one years later in Baghdad, leaving behind him multiple works. Alongside his deep familiarity with Islamic learning — Qurʾan, orally transmitted sayings, etc. — Ibn Qutayba commanded knowledge of Persian and Greek philosophical and literary traditions as well as Jewish and Christian religious sources.

　　In three of his works, *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*, *Kitāb Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, and *Kitāb ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, Ibn Qutayba reproduces remarkably faithful translations of the Gospels and Torah. Typically, these

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[4] For his biography, see Lecomte (*EI²*, s.v. "Ibn Ḳutayba").

works translate or summarize biblical material then relate Islamic tradi-
tions that connect narrative gaps or correct the rabbinic and Christian-
derived stories. This narrative style, typical of the genre of Qurʾanic
exegesis, characterizes Ibn Qutaybaʾs account of Adamʾs death in the
Maʿārif.[5] The account follows a summary of the birth of Seth ("Shith")
as found in Genesis. In the biblical text, Sethʾs birth inaugurates a series
of short genealogical birth/death statements: Seth is born; Adam dies.
Enosh is born; Seth dies. The chain of birthing and dying continues
until the narrative reaches Noah. At this point, the biblical account
shifts out of the genealogical frame to a storytelling strategy better
suited to conveying the events of the flood. In the rush from Adam
to Noah, however, the biblical redactors left gaping holes in their
account that later commentators attempted to patch. How, for instance,
did Adam die? Adam, after all, plays an immeasurably important role
in the biblical story. Why do the redactors obscure the circumstances
of his death? And, of course, myriad questions remain unanswered
about Seth and the other figures forming the chain tying Adam to
Noah.

   Ibn Qutayba, too, notes these gaps and, like other commentators,
Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, supplies the missing information. Ibn
Qutaybaʾs privileged sources are Islamic. In the manner of a careful
exegete, he provides a long *isnād* (chain) of *ḥadīth* conveyors stretching
back to ʿAta (d. 114/732–733), Mufti of Mecca and noted jurist and
ḥadīth collector, and Abi (Abu Hurayra? d. 57 or 58/676–678), a con-
temporary of the Prophet,[6] for the segment on the death and burial
of Adam. The sayings traced through these *ḥadīth* conveyors present
Adamʾs interment in terms of the Islamic congregational prayer. Adamʾs
body is washed, embalmed, and wrapped in a shroud. The archangel
Jabril then leads the funeral prayer. A host of other angels lines up
behind Jabril as if participating in a state funeral at the grand mosque
of the empireʾs capital city. The imagery is political and Islamic. Adam
is the original prototype of core Islamic practices, religious and politi-
cal. In the Qurʾan (Q 2:30), God declares the first human being to be
the *khalīfa* (Caliph, "Viceroy") tasked with enacting the divine will on

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[5] All references to this text come from Ibn Qutayba (1970:10–11).

[6] Goldziher (*EI¹*, s.v. "Abū Hurayra"); Robson (*EI²*, s.v. "Abū Hurayra"); Zettersteen
(*EI¹*, s.v. "ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ"); Schacht (*EI²*, s.v. "ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ").

earth. Adam is the first such figure, paradigmatically, and as such, at his death, he logically must receive full state honors.[7]

Interestingly, details from Jewish and Christian renditions of this story appear in Ibn Qutayba's account. First is the trek Adam's sons take to the gates of paradise and their rejection there by the angels. Second is the reference to embalming. Both the story of the attempted journey to paradise and the issue of embalming appear in rabbinic legends and extra-canonical Christian materials.[8] Yet a third point at which Ibn Qutayba's narratives parallels Christian and Jewish stories of Adam's demise concerns Adam's burial site. Ibn Qutayba introduces this segment by claiming the details of the story to have been related by the authoritative Wahb b. Munabbih (b. 34 H.), a second-generation Muslim (i.e. *tābiʿī*) and *ḥadīth* collector known for his extensive knowledge of Jewish and Christian materials (Horovitz, *EI¹*, s.v. "Wahb b. Munabbih"). The narrative, then, is presented as an Islamic one, deriving from an Islamic source, a saying of the prophet conveyed through individuals who either knew him or knew his companions. The story relates how Adam is buried in a place called "the cave of treasures" near Abi Qubays. Noah then exhumes Adam's corpse, places it in a coffin or Ark (*tābūt*),[9] and carries it with him during the flood. The story thus far is very similar to the one told in the Syriac legend of the cave. There is a twist at the end, however: Instead of Noah depositing the body at Golgotha in Jerusalem — as happens in the Syriac version, and as the Christian interest in connecting the "old" Adam with Jesus, the "new" Adam,

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[7] There is a long-established Muslim iconographic tradition of visually portraying Adam as a royal figure seated upon a throne receiving the acknowledgement of the angels, save Iblis (Satan), who, in Q 27:49, refuses to honor God's command to show deference to the first human being. See Milstein, Rührdanz, and Schmitz (1999:106 ff.)

[8] The Arabic term for "embalm" is *ḥannaṭa*. The same word is used in the Arabic version of the *Cave of Treasures* (Bezold 1883:39). The term also appears in Thaʿlabi's and Ibn Kathir's renditions of Adam's death — see further below. Ibn Qutayba uses the third person plural form *ḥannaṭūhu* ("they embalmed him"). The inclusion of this detail is curious, given that Muslim (and Jewish) burial rituals exclude embalming. When a Muslim dies, her corpse is interred immediately after washing and enshrouding. In Adam's case, the embalming seems necessary, since Adam's corpse must somehow remain intact long enough for later transport in Noah's boat to Jerusalem and then to Mecca.

[9] The word *tābūt* refers simultaneously in this context to "coffin" and the Ark of Noah.

would require — Ibn Qutayba has Noah returning Adam to "his place" on Abi Qubays near Mecca.

In this rerouting of Noah's itinerary we glimpse how the emerging Sunni-Islamic-biblical imaginary assimilates competing Christian and Jewish narratives to link a foundational figure in the Abrahamic tradition to Islam's political and religious point of origin. The Prophet began his preaching in Mecca and redirected Muslim prayer toward that city after having made Jerusalem the first *qibla*. Of course, it is also to Mecca, in a reenactment of the Qurʾanic story of Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismaʿil (Ishmael), and Hajar (Hagar) and in imitation of the Prophet's own practice, that Muslims globally have ever since made their annual pilgrimage. The Muslims needed Adam transported and re-interred in Mecca for the very same reasons Christians insisted his remains reside at Golgotha in Jerusalem. A new religio-political order had emerged, one that claimed to have returned the older monotheistic systems to their origins. In Ibn Qutayba's case, this ideological project of rooting the Islamic order in primordial times coincided with the Abbasids's decisive rejection of proto-Shiʿi parties and Muʿtazali doctrines in favor of the competing *ahl al-sunna wa ʾl-jamāʿa* movement. Ibn Qutayba, through his literary and exegetical work, became an "eminent representative, if not the exclusive spokesman" of this shift toward Sunnism (emphasizing the *ḥadīth* and the Prophet's example, *sunna*, in particular). Hence, his account of Adam's death reflects an effort to re-cast the political order in the manner Verdery describes — "a reburial (re)sacralizes the political order represented by those who carry it out" (Verdery 1999:31–32). But when that political order is fused to a religious one, acts of reinterment, literal or mythical, simultaneously revise the religio-cosmological structure, as well. On multiple levels, Ibn Qutayba redraws the religious realm: as a scholarly spokesman for the emerging Sunni orthopraxy, he subtly subjects the biblical narratives to the canon and methods of *ḥadīth*-oriented exegesis, thereby distinguishing Sunni orientations from "heterodox" claims, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. These same impulses appear in subsequent scholarly renderings of Adam's death, as well, but with significant variations in content, form, and perspective.

Al-Thaʿlabi

An important later rendition of the Adam story appears in the work of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim Abu Ishaq al-Nisaburi al-Thaʿlabi (d. 427/1035), a Qurʾan exegete.[10] His imposing *tafsīr* (commentary on the Qurʾan), *al-Kashf wa ʾl-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, drew on approximately one hundred sources in addition to the monumental al-Tabari and served as a primary reference until the early to mid-seventh/thirteenth century. The work remains unpublished today due to concerns regarding the reliability of some of his sources (Rippin, *EI²*, s.v. "al-Thaʿlabī"). Al-Thaʿlabi is best known, however, for his compilation of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*.[11] Evolving from his Qurʾanic studies, this collection of biblical narratives was meant to supplement the *Kashf wa ʾl-bayān*. It remains "the standard source of Islamic prophet stories, alongside the work of al-Kisāʾī" (Rippin, *loc. cit.*). However, although al-Thaʿlabi narrates the stories in great detail, he avoids "the worst feats of imagination of the *ḳuṣṣāṣ* such as we find in al-Kisāʾī" (Brockelmann, *EI¹*, s.v. "al-Thaʿlabī").[12] Thaʿlabi's collection, in other words, although aimed at a general, non-scholarly audience for purposes of instilling virtue (Rippin, *loc. cit.*), evinces a scholarly style absent in the Kisaʾi material, which derives from popular preaching and bears parallels with folkloric tales like Antar (Nagel, *EI²*, s.v. "al-Kisāʾī").

Al-Thaʿlabi's collection of the stories of the prophets draws on three levels of transmission: a) "the People of the History and the Originators of the Stories" — an euphemism for Jewish and Christian sources; b) Ibn Ishaq,[13] d. 150/767, hence two generations removed from the Prophet; and c) contemporaries of the Prophet such as Abu Hurayra and Ibn ʿAbbas. The narratives attributed to "the People of the History

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[10] See Brockelmann (*EI¹*, s.v. "al-Thaʿlabī") for al-Thaʿlabi's biography.

[11] References to this work are taken from al-Thaʿlabi (n. d.:41).

[12] Brockelmann's judgment reflects the prejudices of his sources. As noted earlier, scholars in later periods resented and condemned the popular preachers for inappropriate use of biblical stories and *ḥadīth* materials.

[13] Ibn Ishaq was the grandson of a Christian captured in 12/633. Brockelmann (*EI¹*, s.v. "Ibn Isḥaḳ") speculates that, although raised a Muslim, his Christian background might have been a source for Muslim oral traditions that incorporated details from biblical legends alongside sayings of the Prophet.

and the Originators of the Stories" deal with Adam's illness, the writing of his last testament, and the concealing of the will from Qabil (Cain). Adam's illness appears in the rabbinic legends (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:93); and Adam's exhortations against associating with Qabil figure in Christian literature such as the *Cave of Treasures* (Budge 1927:154–163). The details concerning Adam's descendants, Adam's wish to grant David forty extra years from his own lifespan, and his surprise at being summoned to die, having forgotten his gift of extended life to David — elements related on the authority of Abu Hurayra — seem to expand on the laconic Qur'anic passage describing how Adam's progeny, who came from his loins (*ẓuhūr*, literally, "back," cf. Q 7:172–73), will appear before God at the final judgment (Kister 1993:154–163, for further discussion) as well as the verses in the Qur'an in which Adam is described as having forgotten his covenant with God and being inconstant (e.g. Q 20:115) — a comment that, itself, seems to respond to or parallel rabbinic debates on why Adam failed to live out a full millennium. Thaʿlabi's narrative, paraphrasing the tradition from Abu Hurayra, concludes that because Adam forgot so, too, would his progeny also forget and thus be consigned to toil on the earth until the Final Day. This conclusion reflects the distinctive Islamic theodicy, as it took form in the Qur'an and later commentarial literature, explaining human suffering as a consequence of a failure to remember God and his commandments. (The Qur'an refers to itself as a *dhikr* or remembrance from and of the Lord to humanity.) Finally, the description of how Adam gives David extra years from his own lifespan serves to explain why Adam fails to live a full one-thousand years.

The third major section of al-Thaʿlabi's version relates Adam's death and burial. The part attributed to Ibn Ishaq mixes Islamic burial customs with details paralleling Jewish and Christian accounts. The tradition attributed to Ibn Ishaq uses the frame of Islamic burial customs to describe what happens to Adam's corpse after his death. In this instance, the angels wash, embalm, and wrap the body in a shroud. In contrast with Ibn Qutayba's version, Jabril, rather than leading the prayer himself, instructs Seth to take charge of the prayers for his father's sake. Seth does so and in the process utters thirty *takbīr* (exclamations of God's greatness) — "five of them for the prayer and twenty-five for the esteem of Adam." The elements that seem to echo Jewish and Christian

narratives include the eclipse of the sun and moon (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:99) and the embalming (Budge 1927:73).[14] The narrative elements citing Ibn ʿAbbas as *ḥadīth* source reproduce the story of Noah transporting Adam's corpse in the Ark to Jerusalem. Included here, as well, is mention of Eve's death and her burial next to him. The Noah story faithfully parallels the account in the *Cave of Treasures* while the details describing Eve's fate echo the rabbinic legends.

Al-Thaʿlabi concludes his section on Adam's death with a discussion of conflicting views concerning the site of Adam's interment. Ibn ʿAbbas says Adam died on a Friday, was buried on Mount Nud in India, but then during the flood was taken by Noah and reburied in Jerusalem. Ibn Ishaq has Adam residing in the East of Eden. "Others," Thaʿlabi notes, place Adam's grave in Mecca itself. Still "others" insist his remains lie in the cave of Abi Qubays (facing the Kaʿba in Mecca) "which is the Cave of the Treasure." Al-Thaʿlabi, like a careful scholar, avoids stating which opinion he agrees with. Rather, he presents the range of accounts and leaves it up to the reader to decide. Still, given the Islamic framing of the ritual surrounding Adam's burial and the placing of the accounts arguing for interment in or near Mecca at the end of the burial scene, one might infer al-Thaʿlabi prefers these traditions to the ones that have Adam's corpse ending up in Jerusalem — a city conquered by Muslims and connected with the legend of Muhammad's *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* (night flight and ascension to heaven) but also still powerfully associated with Jewish and Christian claims. The assimilation and appropriation of Adam as a model of Islamic piety, practice, and prophetic virtue would require the transport of his corpse to the cultic center of the Muslim *umma*. The Adam who ends up in Mecca becomes unambiguously Islamic even as his ties to Jerusalem remain relevant to the Islamic sense of continuity with, and revision of, previous revelation.

Ibn Kathir

A final example of scholarly approaches to *qiṣaṣ* materials — one reflecting the established fact, by this point, of Sunni religious hegemony but also the fragmented politics brought on by the Mongol invasions and

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[14] The washing and wrapping of Adam's body are details that also appear in these Jewish and Christian texts.

continuing European crusades — is the work of Ibn Kathir. Born in
Basra, in present-day Iraq, around 700/1300, Ibn Kathir became a stu-
dent of the famous Ibn Taymiyya and then embarked upon his own
scholarly career as a historian and compiler of traditions. He eventually
died in Damascus in 774/1373.[15] For much of his career Ibn Kathir
languished in obscurity. In 746/1345, however, he was appointed *khaṭīb*
(preacher) of the mosque of Mizza. Then, in 767/1366, he advanced to
the Umayyad mosque in Damascus (767/1366), where he taught
Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsīr*) until his death. His best known works include
his history of Islam, *al-Bidāya wa ʾl-nihāya*, his *ḥadīth* catalog, *Kitab
al-Takmīl*, his qurʾanic commentary, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, and his collection
of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. At the behest of the governor of Damascus, who
feared incursions by the Franks based in Cyprus, he also produced a
work detailing warrants for *jihād* as a duty incumbent upon Muslims in
the frontier regions.

   Like al-Thaʿlabi, Ibn Kathir ties his *qiṣaṣ* narratives tightly to the
Qurʾanic text and the interpretive questions it raises. An exegete
schooled in the canons of Islamic scholarship, he is especially conscien-
tious about providing the *isnād*s (chains of transmission) for the stories
he relates. The major topics of Ibn Kathir's version of Adam's death
include Seth and the final testament of Adam; the death and burial of
Adam; the debate concerning Adam's burial site; the problem of Adam's
age; mourning for Adam; and the exploits of some of Adam's descen-
dants.[16] The treatment of Seth contains two interesting points of detail:
first, Seth is established as a prophet — God bestows revelation upon
him ("Verily God sent down one hundred and forty book, on Seth
fifty"), sine qua non of an Islamic-type messenger of the divine. Seth is
also identified as the only genealogical link, through Noah, connecting
all of humanity with Adam. Second, in transmitting his final testament
to his son, Adam also instructs Seth in Muslim worship — the "hours
of the night and day" — and passes on knowledge of the flood that
would come in the time of Noah. Ibn Kathir seems concerned here to
frame the custom of last will and testament in the context of canonical

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[15] The details recounted here come from Laoust (*EI²*, s.v. "Ibn Kathīr, ʿImād al-Dīn
Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Kathīr").
[16] References to Ibn Kathir's version of the Adam story come from Ibn Kathir (1992:
65–67).

Islamic practice — e.g. instruction in prayer ritual. The special knowledge of the flood and the bestowing of revelation, moreover, serve to confirm Seth's prophet status.[17] Upon Adam's death he is also said to have taken "all burdens of authority upon himself." He does so as an aspect of the investiture he receives from Adam. This detail implicitly frames the much disputed familial succession among the caliphs as a divinely established institution, one that begins with the first humans and is confirmed by God in the bestowal of fifty books of revelation on Seth.

The bulk of Ibn Kathir's treatment of Adam's death and burial relies on a tradition connected to Kaʿb.[18] Not surprisingly, thus, this account bears strong parallels with rabbinic legends. First, there is the scene in which Adam's sons go to Paradise in search of its fruit. In the rabbinic stories, Seth and Eve go to the Garden to obtain oil that will heal Adam (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:93–94). In Ibn Kathir's account, Adam's sons meet the angels who force them to halt and turn back. Adam must die, and so he does. The successive washing, embalming, wrapping, and interring of Adam's corpse by the angels then follow. The very same ritual process appears in the rabbinic material (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:100). In Ibn Kathir's version the preparation of Adam's corpse ends with the angels stating to the "children of Adam" that the rituals they have just performed are to be "your custom."[19] Significantly, Ibn Kathir gives the story an Islamic ending by relating a tradition on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbas that has the angels extolling God's greatness (*takbīrāt*). Thus, similar to other commentators, Ibn Kathir roots established Sunni practice in primordial beginnings: "Abu Bakr (the first caliph, or 'successor,' after Muhammad's death) proclaimed God's greatness four times over Fatima (daughter of the Prophet and wife of Ali, the fourth

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[17] As Marilyn Waldman has argued, such knowledge, or "guidance," is part of the "general… image of the prophetic role" that emerges within and across Qurʾanic accounts of biblical figures like Adam, Noah, Seth, Abraham, Moses, David, Joseph, Jesus, and others (Waldman 1986:54).

[18] Kaʿb was the well-known early Jewish convert to Islam responsible for transmitting a number of Jewish legends (Schmitz, *EI²*, s.v. "Kaʿb al-Aḥbār").

[19] Prior to this sequence, as well, Ibn Kathir mentions the eclipse of the sun and moon at the hour of Adam's departure from the world. These details parallel exactly the rabbinic narratives.

caliph);[20] and ʿAmr proclaimed God's greatness four times over Abu Bakr; and Sahib proclaimed God's greatness four times over ʿAmr."

Regarding Adam's burial site, Ibn Kathir presents two opinions stemming from Christian traditions: Adam's corpse is either at Abi Qays, where the Cave of the Treasure is situated (near Mecca); or he is in Jerusalem. Ibn Kathir's third option, the one that perhaps reflects his own opinion because it is the more intensely Islamic one, has Adam's head buried in the Mosque of Ibrahim — presumably the Kaʿba, which, according to Muslim tradition was built by Abraham on the foundations of an earlier mosque built by Adam — and his legs under the "Rock of Jerusalem" — whence the Prophet Muhammad is said to have ascended through the seven levels of heaven. This third choice echoes but also revises rabbinic sources that place Adam under the temple in Jerusalem. In Ibn Kathir's retelling, Jerusalem becomes an annex or extension of Mecca.[21]

Finally, as in the rabbinic sources, Eve (Hawa) receives mention in the section on Adam's death. Yet, in Ibn Kathir's narrative, she serves rhetorical aims distinctly Islamic. Eve appears fearful of the angels after they turn back Adam's children at the gates of paradise. She knows what the angels desire and seeks "refuge with Adam." Adam becomes infuriated: "Away from me! Verily, I certainly came before you. Open the way

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[20] Here we have, perhaps, an implicit argument that Ali, whose thwarted claim to leadership would become the core historical grievance of the later Shiʿa movement, and Abu Bakr reconciled following the dispute concerning the succession that brought the latter to power. Ali thus confirms the Sunni version of events.

[21] According to the Haggadah, the dust for Adam's formation was taken from the Jerusalem temple's altar. It is in this place that Jewish legend says Adam was buried. An alternative version in Zohar 1:56b, however, argues that Adam was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:101, n. 137). This detail, apparently, may be the basis for the account of Adam's burial in the Christian Syriac text, *Cave of Treasures.* Interestingly, Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti, author of a collection of *faḍāʾil bayt al-maqdis* (literature in praise of the "excellences of Jerusalem"), has Adam's legs resting under the Dome of the Rock on the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) and his head in the Mosque of Abraham, presumably the one honoring the site of Abraham's tomb in the town of al-Khalil, i.e. Hebron (al-Wasiti 1979:77). What emerges in these three genres is an Islamo-Judeo-Christian biblical tradition that evolves among the successive, overlapping communities residing in what the Romans referred to as *Palestina Prima* and the Muslims later called *jund filasṭīn* ("Military District of Palestine") or simply, *filasṭīn.*

between me and the angles of my Lord, all powerful and mighty." This narrative sequence reinforces the basic androcentric order. Eve, typical of all women, responds to death emotionally, attempting to block it by literally throwing her body in its path. Adam's reaction exemplifies proper male virtue: death is to be faced courageously. Adam, like a true Muslim and *mujāhid* (one who fights on behalf of God, a soldier or warrior), submits himself to God's will, ruthlessly repulsing spousal love and familial responsibility to honor his duty to his Lord. Given the continuing experience of Frankish invasion in the Syrian regions, the stress on martial stoicism appears to reinforce virtues essential to the proper and effective practice of *jihād*.

A final concern of Ibn Kathir is the problem of Adam's age. According to biblical legend, Adam dies at the age of nine hundred and thirty years — seventy years shy of one thousand. Unlike the other Muslim writers, Ibn Kathir declines to use the story about David receiving years from Adam's life span to explain this discrepancy. Instead, he relates a tradition from Ibn ʿAbbas and Abu Hurayra asserting baldly that Adam was one thousand years old at the time of his demise. The problem for Ibn Kathir is that Jewish sources contradict this assertion. Ibn Kathir handles this problem in two ways: First, he says the Jewish scriptures are untrustworthy since they contain details that can be refuted (the notion of *taḥrīf* — "deviation") — a standard argument advanced within the Qurʾan itself and by later Muslim thinkers vis-à-vis the biblical texts held by the *ahl al-kitāb* ("People of the Book"). Second, he dabbles in a bit of temporal recalculation. The Jewish scriptures apparently determined Adam's age according to the solar calendar. When converted to the Islamic lunar calendar, Adam's age comes to nine hundred and fifty-seven. The remaining forty-three years comprise the time Adam spent in Paradise prior to his expulsion.[22]

As his approach to the question of Adam's age at death shows, Ibn Kathir adopts an equivocal, critical stance toward the pre-Islamic biblical legends. His ambivalence reflects the scholarly view that such legends, because of their putatively problematic derivation, require skeptical application. These stories cannot be ruled out entirely: the

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[22] For Jewish explanations of Adam's failure to complete a thousand years of life, see the *Book of Jubilees* 4:30.

Jewish and Christian stories fill gaps left by the elliptic Qurʾanic narrative. Yet, the scholar must be careful to note the points of conflict with the Qurʾan and *ḥadīth* reports. Indeed, demarcating the lines of distinction between Islamic truth and Jewish and Christian heterodoxy is as crucial a task as assimilating the biblical materials to fill out the Qurʾanic accounts. These concerns, although they course throughout Ibn Kathir's presentation of the *qiṣaṣ* material, become particularly pointed in his narration of Adam's death and burial. To paraphrase Verdery again, re-presentations of the demise and interment of founding figures symbolically recast the collective. In such fashion, Ibn Kathir's account of the passing of monotheism's primordial ancestor ultimately serves a larger ideological project of reconfiguring biblical genealogy to reflect a specifically Islamic relgio-political teleology. Ibn Kathir's version of Adam's death reflects the scholarly attempt to control and direct this interpretive project. Others, however, contest this attempt to monopolize. Far less concerned with questions of derivation and authenticity, these others relish vivid detail and drama as they spin elaborate tales for listeners who gather to hear them in streets and homes. Many of these narratives have come to us in the collection of *qiṣaṣ* materials bearing the name of al-Kisaʾi.

Popular Preaching Sources

Al-Kisaʾi

Little is actually known about al-Kisaʾi. Although Eisenberg attempted to prove this mysterious author was none other than the famous philologist, Abu al-Hassan ʿAli b. Hamza al-Kisaʾi, no independent evidence exists that Abu al-Hassan ever produced a version of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. Moreover, the text of the Kisaʾi manuscript dealt with here indicates multiple authors. The most that can be said is this collection reflects the popular storytelling traditions of medieval Islam. Nagel (*EI²*, s.v. "al-Kisāʾī") dates the oldest of the extant manuscripts — all of which differ in period, size, content, and organization — to the thirteenth century C.E.; Vadet (1975:6) argues for an eleventh century origin. In narrative style, the *qiṣaṣ* of al-Kisaʾi parallels popular romance

legends like those of ʿAntar. Both genres reflect the narrative landscape through and against which non-elite medieval Muslims dramatically elaborated their religious and cultural ideals (Nagel, *loc. cit.*).

The mystery surrounding the author is not the only distinguishing characteristic of this collection of *qiṣaṣ* traditions. Al-Kisaʾi's rendition of Adam's death, for instance, differs radically from Ibn Kathir's careful use of biblical legend to expand the Qurʾanic narrative. Al-Kisaʾi mentions only two transmitters of *ḥadīth* (Ibn ʿAbbas and Kaʿb) whereas Ibn Kathir provides *isnād*s bearing numerous documented names. Also, in contrast with the scholarly texts presented earlier, al-Kisaʾi's account is by far the most detailed and dramatically vibrant of the bunch. This character of the narrative betrays its probable use in street preaching, in which the ability to hold an audience's attention depends on the use of arresting portrayals.

The Kisaʾi version of Adam's death[23] features at least twelve different thematic blocks: (1) the physical and cosmological dimensions of death; (2) the dispute concerning Adam's age: the story of David receiving extra years of life from Adam; (3) predestination and final judgment: the horror of death personified; (4) Adam's last testament; (5) social justice: Adam's apocalyptic vision; (6) reprise of Adam's last testament; (7) Adam's death: the garden scene and the gall of separation; (8) Adam's ascension prefigured; (9) treachery overcome: Adam's vision of Able (Habil); (10) burial — establishing Sunni custom; (11) the excellencies of Adam — confirming his status as a prophet in the Islamic mold; (12) Eve's death — paradigm for female-specific mourning practices and reinforcement of androcentric social order.

As is perhaps appropriate for preaching genres — genres marked by an immediate, face-to-face dialogical engagement with audiences — Kisaʾi begins his account with that most fundamental of questions: the extinction of life and the reasons for it. The story opens with God revealing (*awḥā*) to Adam that the time for his departure from the mortal world has arrived. Adam then responds in a most human way: "O Lord, what is death?" Such a question surely crossed the minds of those who might have heard a preacher recount this story. By posing this question right from the start, Kisaʾi thus anticipates a standard audi-

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[23] References to the Kisaʾi text come from Al-Kisaʾi (1922:73–79).

ence concern. The hermeneutical situation of preaching was an inter-subjective one. Meaning emerged from the interaction of speaker and listener. Listener questions shaped the narrative even before listeners posed their questions.[24] In the case of Adam's death, the narrative begins effectively by addressing the concern for death that people living in societies deeply familiar with the ravages of plague, famine, and war might have had. What is death? And why must humans suffer it? Kisa'i goes into great detail.

> [Death is] the end which I [God] have decreed (*katabuhu*) for all my creatures; and, it is, O Adam, a most intense bitterness of the deadly poison; and it annihilates the vitality of the face and speech together with loveliness and beauty until the body returns as it once was. And so it returns to the belly of the earth. Hence, the earth eats the lard, the meat, the blood, the bones, and every part of it until it becomes mud as it once was. Such shall it do with you, O Adam, until you return to desiccated mud. (Al-Kisa'i 1922:73–75, for this and surrounding text)

Death comes as divinely inscribed fate. Humans, it is implied, must simply accept this fact. It is a terrifying event — one that completely disfigures and transfigures the body, returning it to its primal state. The earth becomes a carnivorous beast, masticating flesh and bone until they turn to mud. The effect of this description is at once explanatory and didactic. It answers the questions of what death is and why it comes but also encourages *taqwā*, in the sense of a "fear" or "consciousness" of the awesomeness of God. The point of preaching was to convey and instill Islamic piety (implied in the term, *taqwā*) — to create virtuous "Islamic subjects" — among the populace.[25] The dynamic here is similar to the one Saba Mahmood describes in her discussion of "positive ethics" and Foucauldian "modes of subjectivation" as they manifest in

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[24] Berkey comments: "An audience … might help to establish the contours of a preaching session through the questions they put to the preacher" (Berkey 2001:54).

[25] This preaching tradition has deep roots in the eastern Mediterranean. Early Christian theologians and teachers like John Chrysostom also viewed preaching as a pedagogical act in the Greek sense of *paideia* — i.e. educative practice aimed at forming virtue within the subject. Unlike the pagan Greeks, indeed, in a conscious departure from them, however, Chrysostom and the other Church Fathers embraced a "democratic" spirit, arguing that every individual, regardless of social station, was capable of virtue. The Islamic tradition represented in Kisa'i would appear to continue this democratizing impulse. On preaching in classical Christianity, see Maxwell (2006).

the women's mosque movement in modern Egypt (Mahmood 2006:27–31). As with the women Mahmood interacts with, one might understand the dynamic between preacher and audience in the medieval period as a process of subjectivation in which listeners are being called to submit to a moral code that includes specific bodily dispositions and corresponding habits of mind. The persuasive force of this moral code rests on its relationship to collective understandings about human destiny grounded in Qurʾanic and extra-Qurʾanic biblical narratives. One submits to Islamic ritual and legal codes, becoming Muslim in body and mind, as part of a larger drama in which human beings properly constituted become willing instruments and evidence of divine power. The first step in this process of creating the Islamic subject is the didactic one in which the listener is faced with God's awesomeness and the consequences of failing to adhere to the divine writ. The proper, expected response is *taqwā*. Here, too, the preaching literature reflected in the *qiṣaṣ* provides "models of and for" piety in their portrayals of the reactions and demeanor of the prophets and patriarchs, beginning with Adam.[26]

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[26] The reference to "models of and for" is, of course, to the famous essay in which the late Clifford Geertz offered a definition of religion as a cultural system. In the Geertzian sense, models function symbolically in two ways: First, they explain empirical realities and social experiences by charting relationships "in synoptic form — as to render them apprehensible." Second, they serve as a "theory . . . under whose guidance physical relationships are organized." Geertz continues: ". . . culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves" (Geertz 1973:93). Mahmood, following Foucault, might argue that embodied practices as models in this Geertzian sense precede conceptualization. Geertz, as Asad argues, betrays a Protestant privileging of meaning/conceptualization whereas medieval Catholicism and Islam stress institutionalized disciplinary practices that shape a bodily habitus (Asad 1993:27–54). It is the conforming of the self to this habitus that produces meaning. These practices are embedded within institutional forms, regimes of truth, which undergo historical transformations. Geertz's approach, by contrast, argues Asad, tends to become almost theological in the seeming presumption that models act autonomously to shape the subject. (Asad's criticism is a bit unfair. Geertz actually addresses the question of institutions and historical shift in the essay, "Ritual and Social Change," which appears in the same volume as the one in which he offers his definition of religion as a cultural system.) Still, implicit within embodied practices and their associated truth regimes are theories or narratives that function interactively much in the same way as Geertz's models. What is Adam, in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, if not a paradigm of and for Islamic piety?

Along these same lines of instilling piety, the narrative continues with a detailed description of God's promise of resurrection and recompense "according to the measure of your works." The motive for and purpose of piety, *taqwā*, rests finally in the knowledge and certainty of divine justice and judgment. The type of afterlife entered into depends on the individual. Humans have a choice to embrace discipline, to become Muslim in body and mind, by submitting to right practice, constituted by the *sharīʿa* and embodied figuratively in the examples of the Islamic prophets from Adam to Muhammad. The individual faces judgment. But she should rest assured that if she makes a good faith effort to adhere to the moral code, then God will punish wrongdoing but once while rewarding faithful effort ten times over.

Part of living Islamically, of embodying *taqwā*, and thus deserving paradise, is learning to die a good death. Dying a good death entails embracing one's inevitable end with stoic decorum. In the face of death — personified in Kisaʾi's narrative as a terrible, terrifying angel of mammoth proportions — Adam faints, hardly an auspicious response, especially for a putative exemplar of Islamic virtue. Yet, perhaps this reaction, in its fundamental humanness, makes Adam all the more compelling for listeners who also might very well collapse at the thought of dying. Later, Adam protests the arrival of death because his allotted time has not yet arrived — also a very human response. He has to be reminded that he gave some of his years to David. Adam eventually is shown to have come to terms with his end. When the angel comes, he takes the cup of death and drinks it without protest or comment. Presumably, the promise of resurrection and restoration had "[taken] the fear out of death." In contrast with Adam's fear and resistance, Kisaʾi reports that Muhammad, God's final messenger, alone of all the prophets, embraced death without any trepidation at all. He trusted God's promises implicitly and described death as the "blessed cup." Muhammad, in this account, represents the perfection of the ideal Islamic subject. The ideal begins with Adam, the first human, develops progressively through the rest of the biblical prophets, reaching full realization in Muhammad, God's final messenger, the perfected human (*al-insān al-kāmil*).[27]

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[27] In this vision of the "perfect human being," one in which death is embraced stoically and resolutely as a sign of one's *taqwā*, there is an echo of the ethic of sacrifice on behalf of the tribe in the pre-Islamic *muruwwa* ("virtue") and its continuation as the

Significantly, such an ideal contrasts with the one associated with females. At the end of Kisaʾi's retelling of the Adam death sequence comes the last breath and burial of Eve. When she hears of Adam's demise, Eve weeps inconsolably. Seth comes to her and commands: "O mother, cease your weeping and seek your consolation in God Almighty! For my father has tasted Death's repast and has gone to his Lord. He commanded me not to inform you of that until after his burial. So, you must be steadfast." Women are not to be informed of death, presumably because they cannot be "steadfast." Rather than become stoic, Eve shreds her robes, screams out, and strikes her face and chest. She clings to Adam's grave for forty sleepless days until she, too, is visited by death. The narrator comments on Eve's behavior, stating, "And, so, she bequeathed that [behavior] to her daughters until the Day of Resurrection," thereby naturalizing a particularly patriarchal theory of female emotionalism and irrationality by fixing its origins at the very genesis of humanity.[28] Still, when death overtakes her, Eve accepts it unquestioningly and thus even females might approximate the ideal attitude of the Muslim believer in the face of her divinely appointed fate.

The question of virtue relates to another set of questions concerning obedience to, or willing acquiescence in, authority, or authoritative models. Embedded in these issues is the problem of politics and power. What, then, are the politics of Kisaʾi's narration of Adam's death? Surrounding the description of Adam's fainting before the gigantic angel of death is an apocalyptic vision. The angel possesses two enormous wings. Under one, he shelters the faithful who will be ushered into paradise. Under the other are the "apostates and deniers of the truth." After Adam recovers consciousness, he proclaims: "What is more terrifying than Death? And what more horrible than its appearance? How astonishing, O God, that some made use of it in attaining their livelihood"

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self-sacrificing *jihād*, "striving" to enact the *dīn* ("way," discipline) of God on behalf of the *umma*, or "Islamic community" (Goldziher 1967–1971, 1:22; Watt 1961:107–9; Cook 2005:5–48).

[28] The concept of female emotionalism has deep roots in Greek anthropological theories and is preserved within Christian, Jewish, and Islamic notions of male-female distinctions. These ideas persist in the present, as well. See Rosen (1984:30 ff.) and Mernissi (1987:42–45, especially) for discussion of these issues as they manifest in contemporary Morocco.

(Al-Kisaʾi 1922:75). On its face, this segment serves as a morality tale: the good shall prosper in paradise in the end whereas apostates, deniers of truth, and those who made use of violence to win their "livelihood" shall ultimately be thrown into the fires of hell. The purpose seems to be to encourage piety among the masses. Considering how preachers often served as agents of the state, their underlying purpose in preaching would have been to legitimize caliphal authority and the *sharīʿa* as bearers of the divine will and correspondingly to impress upon their listeners the need to submit, willingly. Creating the docile Islamic subject was, thus, a deeply political project embedded within popular preaching genres. In this sense, preaching served the purpose of forming acquiescent subjects of the state and obedient followers of the established social authorities, including the scholarly elite, the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ.

At the same time, the representatives of established authority, the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ, often viewed preachers as purveyors of heterodox knowledge. They constituted a threat to the social status claims of the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ and the monopoly on knowledge that anchored those claims. Given this perception of the popular preachers as peddlers of heterodoxy, it may be more appropriate to view the apocalyptic imagery in Kisaʾi as reflecting the orientations of what Weber ideal-typically termed "the religion of non-privileged strata" (Weber 1978:481–99) rather than the claims of dominant political and cultural authorities. At the heart of religions of the non-privileged, as Weber described them, lie theodicies animated by Nietzschean *ressentiment* — the idea that the privileged had attained their status within the social hierarchy through illegitimate, god-defying means (e.g. the human use of violence that Adam refers to when reflecting on the terror of death). The non-privileged — lower middle class strata comprising artisans, small business people, and so on — gravitate toward salvation religions that promise a reversal of fortunes at the end of time, one that extravagantly compensates for their deprivation in the present, mortal world. What they cannot claim to be now, they can look forward to becoming when the final judgment arrives. The Kisaʾi material, reflecting as it does the intersubjectively formed dispositions of disprivileged groups and the "organic intellectuals"[29]

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[29] Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals" refers to individuals who conceptualize and articulate the consciousness of the different classes comprising a society: "Every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals, or tends to form one" (Gramsci

who interacted with them most closely, can thus be read as reflecting a politics of the non-privileged. These narratives of death and resurrection, I wish to suggest, contain within them an implicit condemnation of the privileged classes — including the ʿulamāʾ and even caliphal authority. Such a conclusion runs counter to Vadet's arguments that Kisaʾi's Adam narrative legitimizes Sunni conceptions of caliphal authority (Vadet 1975:7). Prima facie, as noted above, such an argument makes sense. But, if we take Weber's insights into consideration alongside Berkey's analysis of the tensions between popular preachers and the caliphal and ʿulamāʾ authorities, then we are led to a very different conclusion.

The politics of the non-privileged, which possibly underlie Kisaʾi's retelling of Adam's death, also bear on the segments of the narrative that treat the final testament and burial. In making his final testament to Seth, we witness a concern to transmit (a) the principles of faith (shahāda); (b) instructions regarding future relations with hostile groups — the clan of Qabil, or Cain — against which Seth is to do battle clothed in "the [god-given] raiment of those who strive (jahadū)," trusting that the Lord shall make him victorious; (c) procedures for proper burial ("...learn from [Jabril, who prepares Adam's corpse] until it becomes custom for you and for your descendants after you"); and (d) provisions for smooth succession of leadership on the basis of primogeniture ("[Adam] slipped off his ring from his finger and presented it to [Seth]"). The Angel of Death soon thereafter appears, followed by Jabril and a host of angels bearing banners as if in military procession. The host of angels "brought out the great throne for Adam from the Garden," placing it between heaven and earth. The Angel of Death then addresses Adam: "Peace be upon you, O Father of Humankind. Do you know who I am?" Adam responds affirmatively. The angel tells him he has

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1988:251, but also the extended discussion at 300–11). The preachers, in this sense, comprised a stratum of intellectuals who either developed organically from, or associated themselves with, the non-privileged, popular classes of medieval Islamic societies. They articulated the concerns and orientations of these groups and in doing so adapted Islamic models to the conditions of their existence even as the models served to link the non-privileged to the hegemonic frames of Islam. Islamic narratives thus constituted a field of tension within which diversely situated actors contested interpretations of what it meant to be a Muslim.

been ordered to make Adam drink "this gall and then cause you to taste death." Finally now the disciplined, docile subject of God, Adam responds: "I am an obedient listener to the command of my Lord." He drinks the gall and as he does so his head is lifted into heaven, where he is granted a vision of his murdered son, Able (Habil), who calls him to join him in paradise. Informed by Jabril of his father's death, Seth presents the image of Islamic stoic virtue, repeating the Qurʾanic formula, "Verily, He is God and truly to Him all return!" Jabril responds: "Well done, O Gift of God! You have done rightly; and all who say this in the moments of disaster that come from God shall do rightly." The burial follows next. Like other *qiṣaṣ* accounts, the interment scene employs the congregational prayer as a framing device. Adam dies in the hour between noon (the beginning of Friday prayer) and the moment the imam exits the mosque at the conclusion of the prayer. Seth, not Jabril, then leads innumerable ranks of angels, humans, beasts, reptiles, "rank after rank" — i.e. the entire creation — in the funeral prayer and utterances of glorifications of god (*takbīrāt*) on Adam's behalf.[30]

These descriptions of burial custom should be read as an attempt normatively to anchor Sunni Islamic practices in primordial times, thus legitimizing them. They might also be interpreted as lending support to caliphal authority — Adam, as first caliph, receives a burial fit for a king. If this is so, what then of the assertion that Kisaʾi's narrative reflects needs and sentiments typical of non-privileged strata? Kisaʾi betrays multiple authors or sources, so it is not impossible that this hybrid narrative contains contending, contradicting political projects within its discursive frame. Moreover, if we adopt the interpretive standpoint of the non-privileged, i.e. those who would have been listening to the popular preachers, then Adam becomes symbolic of the transformation in status that marginalized groups desire. He was a sinner who, in the end, proves faithful and obedient to God and is rewarded richly. His treatment in death becomes symbolic of the royal treatment all the righteous will receive even as such honors are denied them here and now.

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[30] By contrast, when Eve dies, her daughters, not the archangel, wash, embalm, and wrap the body. Eve receives no congregational prayer at her burial. Her corpse is interred alongside Adam's. Her burial remains a small family affair. The details concerning Seth and the interment of Adam are from (al-Kisaʾi 1922:75–78).

A final matter requiring discussion is the intertextual parallels and overlaps between the Kisa'i text and Jewish and Christian materials. How does the Kisa'i narrative assimilate these non-Islamic heterodox elements? To get at this question, it may first prove helpful to outline the points of parallel and overlap.

One instance of overlap is the ascension scene. After he dies, Adam is taken up into heaven, preceded by an entourage of angles with unfurled banners. A similar scene unfolds in the rabbinic legends. In these stories, Eve sees Adam traveling to heaven in "a chariot of light, drawn by four shining eagles, and preceded by angels" (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:99–100). Additionally, there is Kisa'i's mention of the hair of Adam's beard in a passage describing a vision granted him by God of an apocalyptic battle to take place between the prophets and pious, led by his son Seth, and the pharaohs, led by the wicked Cain (Qabil):

> [Adam] looked at the pharaohs, and all of them were transported to Cain's side; the remainder of the prophets and pious, all of them were on Seth's side. Then (God) looked at him and ordered the form to fold up and put (itself) into the coffin. Adam then took a bunch of hair from his beard, and he put it in the coffin. Then he said, "O my son, truly you are still victorious over your enemies as long as this hair is still black. If it becomes white, then you shall know that you have died. So, make your testimony to the remainder of your children as I have bequeathed mine unto you." (al-Kisa'i 1922:75–78)

Adam's beard and hair receive mention in other *qiṣaṣ* materials as a sign of his beauty (Kister 1993:139). (All prophets are remarkable for their beauty in the Islamic paradigm for such figures.)[31] In the Bible, hair is connected with divinely instituted political power, and its loss, as the story of Samson illustrates.

Yet a third example of intertextual parallel and overlap lies in Kisa'i's personification of the earth. The rabbinic legends describe the earth

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[31] Goldziher notes that pious Muslims collected samples of hair said to belong to the Prophet Muhammad (1967–1971, 2:329). Such behavior was and is typical of the "cult of the saints" that Peter Brown has described in Christian settings (Brown 1981). The relics of prophets and saints are believed to have a residual power, or "*baraka*" (literally, "blessing," but more precisely interpreted as the aura of the divine power and knowledge that the saint or prophet participated in while alive as an aspect of his or her status as messenger or intermediary with God).

protesting against God's plan to take dust from its bosom to create humanity (Ginzberg 1910–1938, 1:54–55). A similar story appears in al-Thaʿlabi's *qiṣaṣ* material. The scene in Kisaʾi seems to complete a cycle whereby the dust (or mud, as in the Qurʾan) taken by God for creation is returned to the earth through the process of death and decay. A debt is made good. This cycle is a vivid enactment of the repeated Qurʾanic insistence that all living beings shall return to God. Along this vein is Adam's vision of Habil (Able). In Kisaʾi, Able appears to Adam, calling him to heaven. In rabbinic legend, Able, whose corpse continually springs from the ground every time someone tries to bury it, finally receives burial next to Adam. Again, a debt is made good; justice is achieved, through the reunion of the murdered son with his father.

Several other parallels with the rabbinic materials exist. The extensive treatment of Hawaʾs (Eve's) death and burial nearly replicates the rabbinic account. In the Jewish legends, Eve mourns intensely for Adam and yearns to be reunited with her companion. When Eve dies, the archangel, Michael, places Eve's body next to those of Adam and Able. Kisaʾi repeats and elaborates on much of this detail, but he also Islamizes it by re-interring Eve in Jiddah, the seaport town on the western Red Sea coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Similarly, with Adam, Kisaʾi reproduces details found in the rabbinic materials: the last will and testament, the garden episode, and the recounting of Adam's excellences. But, as with Eve, Kisaʾi uses the device of reburial to claim Adam for Islam. There is no mention of the cave of the treasure; rather, Adam's head is confidently and unambiguously situated in "the very Kaʿba" (understood to have been built by Adam and then reconstructed by Abraham after the flood) while his legs are "wherever they could stretch."

In these various intertextual parallels, rabbinic materials are woven seamlessly with Qurʾanic and *ḥadīth* accounts in an act of assimilation that Islamizes these materials, bending them to the task of imagining, modeling, and instilling Islamic dispositions. Reburial exemplifies most vividly how this process works. Re-interment situates the mythical figures central to these narratives at the cultic and political origin points of Islam. Adam must end up under the Kaʿba for the Kaʿba is the *qibla* — the direction toward which all Muslims pray and travel on pilgrimage — and also the central temple of the Arabs cleared of its

idols by the victorious Prophet Muhammad. Just as all creation must return to God, so too must Adam return to Islam.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that death and burial narratives in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* open new perspectives on Islamic conceptions of identity and difference as well as on the dynamics through which religions, generally, assimilate contrasting and contending narratives within a shared symbolic field. What exactly, then, are these new perspectives as they have emerged in the foregoing discussion?

Drawing again from Verdery, we might observe first that the narratives concerning Adam's death and reburial reconstitute monotheistic imaginaries, calling forth thereby a new community of believers. As Verdery notes, "reorganizing relations with the dead can be a way of reordering live human communities.... Precisely because the human community includes both the living and dead, any manipulation of the dead automatically affects relations with and among the living" (Verdery 1999:108). Why would this be so? Reburials, especially those with manifest political implications, create "an audience of 'mourners,' all of whom think they have some relation to the dead person" (Verdery 1999:108). In doing so, reburials "reaffirm community" but at the same time "narrow and bound it" (Verdery 1999:108). They both include and exclude and in doing so reconfigure the lines of identity and difference. Such dynamics characterize societies undergoing major political transition like those that Verdery examines in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. But, how does this dynamic work in the reburial of mythic religious figures like Adam? In what sense is a new audience of mourners constituted when the reburial that occurs is one that is created for an audience within an imagined, vicarious space rather than within an actual participatory ritual involving a physical corpse and grave?

This question returns us to Verdery's observation that despite the importance of a corpse's materiality, its there-ness, in localizing and concretizing conceptions of collective belonging, a dead body alone has no significance apart from the meanings that groups attach to death. This fact emerges clearly in mythic reburials that must, through story-telling, recreate the drama of death and interment as an imagined,

vicarious moment in the minds of listeners. There is no "there-ness", no physical corpse. Still, the imagined body serves to make collective belonging visualizable, albeit in a less directly tangible form. Whether through the reburial of an actual corpse or an imagined one, what matters is how such re-interments restructure group identity through the production of a new narrative that redefines the lines of exclusion and inclusion. How does this work in the case of mythic reburials such as Adam's in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*?

First, the narratives of Adam's death and interment model — in Geertz's dual sense of explaining and prescribing — forms of virtue (*habitus*) distinctive of the believing Islamic community, or *umma*. The patterns of virtue are gendered. Like Adam, and most especially like the Prophet Muhammad, himself, believing men must evince stoic courage and obedience in the face of death. To be a Muslim man is to submit oneself without question to one's god-given fate. Women, while also expected to submit obediently to their creator, display a contrasting set of behaviors: when faced with death, they show fear and weakness, attempt to block the inevitable, and become emotionally distraught. This gendered contrast underlies a dimorphic organization of space: whereas the mourning and burial of men, especially important men, occur as public ritual led by other men, the final rites for women, even important women, take place within the enclosed confines of the family under supervision of other women. Thus, Adam's sons and the (male) angels perform a state funeral for the first human; the sons do so without even informing their mother. Eve, by contrast, dies in obscurity: her daughters wash, embalm, and bury her beside Adam with no public fanfare whatsoever. Through these models of virtue, an Islamic "imagined community" emerges, one that defines lines of inclusion in terms of specific embodied patriarchal practices. Within this patriarchal model, Adam constitutes unmarked, normative piety, or *taqwā*, corresponding to the public sphere, whereas Eve represents a marked, potentially disrupting deviation from that normative *taqwā* that must remain contained within domestic space. Women, in this sense, serve as an internal Other, one that is part of the Islamic *umma* but problematically so.

Second, in addition to modeling a specifically Islamic pattern of virtue, and thereby defining the lines of inclusion, the Adam narrative in

the *qiṣaṣ* materials bounds the *umma* by marking points of exclusion. The process through which the exclusionary logic occurs is a complex one involving appropriating and resituating narratives shared by the wider monotheistic community comprising Christians and Jews alongside Muslims. Much in the manner in which the Christian New Testament and Church Fathers re-read the texts that comprise the Hebrew Bible to make the case for Jesus as the Messiah, the Qurʾan and later commentarial tradition revise Jewish and Christian biblical accounts in light of Qurʾanic claims about Muhammad and the status of the revelation given to him as the final, definitive divine dispensation. The Adam narrative in the *qiṣaṣ* materials thus integrates Christian and Jewish stories, at times copying them almost verbatim; but in doing so, it resituates these accounts to serve Islamic politico-hermeneutical concerns. In the case of Adam, the primary means through which this occurs involves the interpolation of details from Islamic burial ritual — the uttering of *takbīrāt*, the congregational mosque funeral prayer — and the relocation of Adam's corpse to specifically Islamic territory. In both instances, elements of Christian and Jewish ritual practice and territorial claims are assimilated into the Islamic narrative. Like the Jews and Christians, Muslim burial ritual incorporates the washing and enshrouding of a corpse. And, like Jewish and Christian tradition, Adam's remains, in some of the *qiṣaṣ* accounts, continue to have some connection to Jerusalem — that is to say, although Adam's head invariably ends up in Mecca, his feet might still rest in Jerusalem, and thus the Holy City of the Jews and the Christians becomes an extension of Mecca, participating in the latter's status as the cultic center of Islam.[32] Through these

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[32] Of course, the Qurʾan already hints at such a suggestion in passages that appear to connect with the *isrāʾ wa ʾl-miʿrāj* traditions (cf. Q 17). These traditions developed much later, however, after the Muslim conquest of Palestine. The connection to the Qurʾanic passages was discovered retrospectively at that time. This is not to say that Islam as it took form in the time of the Prophet Muhammad did not view Jerusalem as central to its conception of the *umma*. Muhammad, after all, initially directed Muslims to pray toward Jerusalem, only later revising those instructions in the face of Jewish resistance to his preaching in Medina (Watt 1974: 99, 112–113; but see Goitein [*EI*², "al-Ḳuds. A. History"] for the argument that the change in *qibla* had more to do with Islam's primary orientation toward the cultic practices associated with Mecca than with any putative Jewish resistance to Muhammad's preaching.)

acts of assimilation and recontextualization, Adam's reburial in the *qiṣaṣ* materials serves to "resacralize" and reorder the monotheistic community by resituating the first humans at the very origins of Muslim cultic and religio-political life. The line of descent no longer runs from Adam and Seth to the Christians and Jews in Jerusalem but from Adam and Seth to the Muslims in Mecca (and Jerusalem). Reburials of the dead, even the mythical dead, reorder the community of the living.

Yet, this reordering is also an internally contested process. As Berkey points out, the relationship between the storytelling popular preachers and the scholars was a tension-filled, ambivalent one. State authorities, with the backing of the scholars, attempted to regulate the preachers. Their success in controlling them was mixed at best. In their contrasting methods and tone, the *qiṣaṣ* collections of an Ibn Kathir, the renowned commentator on the Qur'an, and that of someone like the mysterious Kisa'i give evidence of the contested nature of Islamic biblical storytelling and the limited ability of the caliphs or the *ʿulamāʾ* to control it. Ibn Kathir models a sober, restrained, and scholarly approach to the use of the biblical materials. He suspects these stories of containing unreliable, distorted details and is careful to cite long, substantiated chains of transmission featuring well-known Muslim conveyors of *ḥadīth*. Kisa'i, by contrast, reveals no inhibitions in recounting the biblical narratives in great, luxuriant, unrestrained detail, citing only truncated *isnād*s every now and then. Read against the grain, Kisa'i, as suggested, reflects the orientations and interests in salvation of non-privileged groups. Kisa'i, as a multi-authored text, can certainly be understood as legitimizing caliphal authority, as the recounting of Adam's funeral prayer might suggest. However, the evidence that the Kisa'i material reflects the preaching of "organic intellectuals" embedded within the non-elite classes suggests a counter-interpretation: Adam's death and burial, with its associated and richly recounted apocalyptic imagery, expresses the *ressentiment* of the non-privileged and their corresponding hope for revenge, restitution, and elevation by a just God who rewards the obedience of his faithful followers.

The narratives of Adam's death and reburial in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* bear evidence thus of internal cleavages within the *umma* even as they trace a process of assimilation and differentiation vis-à-vis the competing Jewish and Christian communities. Lines of identity and difference

are being drawn at multiple levels and in diverging directions as Muslims recast the biblical imaginary in an effort to give shape and meaning to the emerging Islamic community. The process, then, through which religions "monopolize the practices associated with death" (Verdery 1999:32) is fundamentally a contested one. The monopolizing claims are neither complete nor stable. Rather, in the medieval Islamic milieu, at least, multiple, contrasting interpretations and appropriations of core narratives develop simultaneously and in tension among themselves.

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Asceticism in Transition:
Exploring the Concepts of Memory, Performance and Ambiguity in 20th Century Dutch Monastic Life[1]

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Abstract

Asceticism is a topic of interest among a wide range of scholars. In the past two decades the corpus on asceticism has been growing steadily and contributions have been made from a variety of perspectives (for an overview see Wimbusch and Valantasis, *Asceticism* [1995]). In this article I will focus on the almost unknown history of asceticism in 20th century Dutch monastic life. This is a history that, especially after the 1950s, reflects a period of transition in which a radical erosion of asceticism occurred. In order to understand and explore asceticism in this specific period and context, I will discuss the demarcation of asceticism that Gavin Flood outlined in his thought-provoking study of 2004, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition.* In this book Flood distinguishes three central parameters of asceticism, in short: memory, performance and ambiguity. These three concepts are applied to research material that is based upon a historical study of Catholic spiritual literature (1930–1965) and eighteen interviews with members of Dutch religious communities who personally experienced ascetic practices during their religious lives. I will argue that the memory of ascetic tradition is no longer being appropriated, which has specific consequences for examining the two parameters of performance and ambiguity.

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> The sister who said "How can they make all this up?" was a postulant hearing about what she was required to learn at the Retreat, including the use of the "discipline" [also known as *flagellatio* or flagellation, EB], and all that. This is when she said to the novice mistress, "How can they make all this up?" Yes, she was really shocked in the sense of "No way, we can't go on like that." The novice mistress was quite impressed and went straight to the Mother Superior and said: "This is no longer appropriate because this is how they react to it these days!" (Interview quotation, March 2007)

This anecdote — translated from the Dutch — was related during an interview with a female Franciscan. She was relating a conversation that took place in the early 1960s between one of her fellow sisters and the novice mistress. One immediately notices the astonishment of the postulant and the concern of the novice mistress with regard to the performance of ascetic practices. These practices once formed part of a Christian ascetic tradition but by this time they were no longer being personally appropriated by members of religious communities.

In this article I will discuss a period of transition in the history of asceticism by focusing on the case of 20th century Dutch monastic life. The height of this period of transition can be dated between the late 1950s and the 1960s. In order to gain a better understanding of this transition I will make use of Gavin Flood's delineation of asceticism described in his illuminating book, *The Ascetic Self* (Flood 2004). In the first chapter, "Setting the Parameters," Flood states the general argument about the ascetic self in terms of performance, the memory of a tradition and the ambiguity of the self and subjectivity (Flood 2004:2–4). Flood states that asceticism can be understood as the internalization of the memory of tradition. Ascetic traditions are forms of collective memory that are passed on from generation to generation, shaping the narrative of one's life in accordance with the narrative of ascetic tradition. This transformative process can also be viewed as the performance of the memory of tradition "enacted in the body through praxis and enacted in language through discourse" (Flood 2004:9). The experience of the ascetic self while performing the memory of tradition is characterized by ambiguity that can be described in the following manner: in eradicating one's will one needs a great determinacy of will. The main

question of this article is thus *to examine if the three parameters of memory, ambiguity and performance are a good tool for understanding asceticism in a period of transition.*

Flood based his delineation of asceticism on an extensive comparative study of the three scriptural traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. He discusses asceticism — or the ascetic self — in different times and contexts. Starting with the asceticism of the philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943), he continues with examples from the Brahmanical and Tantric traditions in India and Kashmir respectively, followed by the Theravada tradition from Sri Lanka and South East Asia. Subsequently we read about Desert Fathers such as Evagrius Ponticus (ca. 345–399) and Maximus the Theologian (ca. 580–662), and finally Flood considers medieval monasticism, focusing on Peter Damian (1007–1072) and the mystical writing of Marguerite Porete (d. 1310).[2]

Flood's delineation of asceticism and his description of the ascetic self is based on different research material from that which figures in this article. The empirical material I use derives from a historical study of Catholic spiritual literature (1930–1965) in which diverse genres dealing with asceticism have been closely examined.[3] In addition to the scriptural tradition, oral history plays a crucial role. I conducted retrospective, semi-structured interviews with eighteen members of diverse Dutch religious communities.[4] Because my research material specifically concerns asceticism in Catholic monastic life, that is, asceticism

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[2] Chapters in sequence: 2: The ascetic self in Simone Weil; 3: The asceticism of action (Brahmanical tradition); 4: The asceticism of action: tantra (Tantric tradition); 5: The asceticism of the middle way (Theravada Buddhism); 6: The asceticism of the desert (Desert fathers); 7: The asceticism of love and wisdom (Medieval monasticism).

[3] The study of Catholic spiritual literature includes Dutch monastic magazines, ascetic handbooks, rules and constitutions, Church law and archives. Furthermore, I examined historical studies (also known as memorial volumes) of religious congregations and orders.

[4] All interviews were conducted with members of Dutch religious communities who had personal experience of ascetic practices and the disappearance of these practices during their religious life. To enable more general claims about the Dutch monastic context, I interviewed nine male and nine female respondents. The diversity of spirituality is reflected by the fact that they come from contemplative, semi-contemplative and active religious orders and congregations.

within 20th century Dutch religious congregations and orders, I will relate my argument to the general theoretical framework, with special reference to the Christian ascetic tradition.

In exploring the main question of this article I will argue that within the highlighted period of transition the "memory of ascetic tradition" was no longer being appropriated by members of religious communities. This "failure" of subjective appropriation — the internalization — of ascetic tradition became fully manifest after the second half of the 20th century in Dutch monastic life. This basic premise forms the theoretical underpinning of my article and sets the concepts of both "performance" and "ambiguity" in a specific light.

Monastic Asceticism in Transition

Asceticism was an integral part of Dutch monastic life until approximately the second half of the 20th century. It returned not only in the hardships of everyday monastic life, but also in specific practices and spiritual education. There were of course differences between diverse religious communities in the degree of asceticism, but the research material indicates that the practice — and to a lesser extent the doctrine — of asceticism was omnipresent in Dutch monastic life. For instance, we read in the Church law of 1940 for members of religious communities that "the first and immediate goal of the monastic state of being is the personal sanctification of its members, moral perfection" (Van Groessen 1940:24). This goal is explicitly related to asceticism because it was seen as a *means* to the primary aim of religious life: perfection or, in religious terms, self-sanctification.[5]

The doctrine of asceticism was most elaborately worked out in the Catholic ascetic theology that is also known as "the science of Christian perfection."[6] According to the well-known ascetic handbook *Précis de*

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[5] This is a typically Catholic term that was widespread in Dutch monastic life but difficult to attain because of differences between female and male religious communities. For example, one can think of different conceptions of male and female sanctity within the Catholic Church.

[6] Tanquerey 1948:5. This genre of Catholic spiritual literature can be connected to what the English literature scholar Geoffrey Harpham calls in his book *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* the development of "naming it as a concept," that

Théologie Ascétique et Mystique by the Sulpician Adolph Tanquerey
(1854–1932), ascetic theology

> …chooses from among the teachings of Our Lord, of the Church, and of the
> Saints, all that has reference to the *perfection* of the Christian life, and so coordi-
> nates all these elements as to constitute a real science. (Tanquerey 1948:5)

In ascetic handbooks we read about a Christian anthropology and the-
ology that forms the basis for very specific and elaborate accounts of
subjects such as prayer, penance, mortification and virtues that were all
taught and practised in 20th century Dutch monastic life. However, in
the same century things were about to change.

The 1950s and 1960s represent the height of a period of radical tran-
sition not only in Dutch Catholicism, but also in Dutch monastic life.[7]
During this period, while still trying to remain secluded, Dutch monas-
tic life simultaneously opened up to society. Writing lucidly about
monastic life in the 1960s, the theologian Annelies van Heijst states:

> In the 1960s it was common to talk of the "crisis of religious life." This meant two
> things: monasteries were threatened with extinction because of numerous with-
> drawals and a lack of growth and because they had great trouble finding new fields
> of work and forms of life. (Van Heijst 1985:51; my translation)[8]

The finding of these new "forms of life," in particular, touches on the
topic of asceticism. Van Heijst refers to an awareness that the monastic
style of life needed adaptation and renewal. A lifestyle that was deeply
affected by asceticism was generally felt to be "outdated." This feeling,
or shared mentality, returned in the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965) of
the Second Vatican Council which pleaded for *aggiornamento*, the
adapted renewal of religious life.

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is, the "formalising, systematising and theologising" of asceticism. In my view, the
genre of ascetic handbooks represents the culmination of this development. See
Harpham 1987:xii–xiii.

[7] See, for example, Rogier and de Rooy 1953; Coleman 1978; Simons and Winkeler
1987; Borgman, Dijk and Salemink 1988; Kennedy 1995; Goddijn, Jacobs and Van
Tillo 1999.

[8] The finding of new "terrains of work" applies specifically to active religious
congregations.

In this period of transition, asceticism was a topic of discussion within — and also outside — monastic life. A special edition of the Dutch Dominican monastic magazine *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* (Magazine for Spiritual Life) in 1964 was entitled "Asceticism adrift" and included a discussion of the renewal of Christian asceticism by "modern thinking."[9] These and other critical writings ranged over diverse topics, for example, ascetic theology and its negative views on physicality, the strict interpretation of the vow of obedience, the education of novices, the formalism of community life and the meaninglessness of specific ascetic practices. All of these topics can be connected to a broader development which Flood calls the "erosion of asceticism and the consequent reconfiguring of asceticism in other terms" (Flood 2004:144).[10]

Memory

In the context of asceticism, memory is best understood — and I am following Flood here — as the "memory of tradition." Flood writes that "…central to the concept of tradition is memory, especially collective memory passed through the generations" (Flood 2004:8). In the case of asceticism, the idea of collective memory is all-pervasive, because ascetic traditions within monastic life can be seen as a form of collective memory. A leading notion in this article, with respect to the parameter "memory of a tradition," is based upon the following thought:

> Tradition is not passively received but actively reconstructed in a shared imagination and reconstituted in the present as memory. It is more than the passive conserving of information, it is the active enlivening of the present through links with the past. (Flood 2004:8)

Ascetic tradition as a form of collective memory must be actively enlivened in the present in practice and discourse in order for a community to secure the link with the past. However, it was precisely this active

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[9] *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven*, no. 3–4, 1964.
[10] In the last chapter, "The ascetic self and modernity," Flood examines this broader development and gives a short overview of the modern critique of the ascetic self from diverse philosophical perspectives.

enlivening of ascetic tradition that rapidly eroded in Dutch monastic life after the 1950s. The failure of reconstruction is reflected by the quotation of the female respondent with which this article begins. Here I want to zoom in on two developments at the institutional level, so as to give a first impression of what this particular transition entailed.

When we look, for instance, at the education of novices and members of religious communities, the reading of saints' lives played a significant role in the continuation of ascetic tradition. In religious communities, ascetic saints figured as prominent role models for living an ascetic life. However, a male respondent from the congregation of Passionists, recalling the daily readings in his refectory, sketched an important development in the mid 1950s: "It used to be only the lives of saints, but gradually there was more variety. I remember one book on Eskimos, for example, and after that one about Eisenhower as well" (interview quotation, September 2005). Note here that the readings from the saints' lives were being replaced by readings from the lives of other people or peoples, stories that do not belong to the canon of ascetic tradition.

A second example illustrates even more clearly the transitional context. Primarily after the 1950s, explicit passages on asceticism were being revised or expurgated from the rules and constitutions of religious communities. For instance, in the 1947 *ordinationes* (ordinations) of minor friars we read, under item 37, about the ascetic practice of the "discipline":

> The discipline is held after the Matins, the prayer of the Cross or the *praeces* [pleas]. This act takes place on the days appointed for that purpose, All Soul's Day, Thursday of the Holy Week and the first day after the passing away of a fellow brother housemate. (Nederlandse provincie der minderbroeders 1947:12; my translation)

However, in the revised edition of 1962 the constitutions had been totally rewritten in a different style with no mention whatsoever of the corporal ascetic practice of the discipline (Nederlandse provincie der minderbroeders 1962). In the words of the French sociologist Hervieu-Léger, we could say that the collective memory of ascetic tradition no longer functions as "a regulator for individual memory" or, put more extremely, no longer "takes the place of individual memory" (Hervieu-Léger 2000:124).

Collective Memory and Spiritual Education

Although the collective memory of ascetic tradition was already waning, spiritual education shows how around the 1950s this memory was still institutionalized in Dutch monastic life. The continuation of collective memory was safeguarded by, for example, the roles of the novice master and religious reading in Dutch monastic life. The novice master (or novice mistress) can be seen as the regulator of the individual memory of members of religious communities.[11] He or she represents the collective memory of the ascetic tradition characteristic to the specific religious order or congregation.

The novice master or novice mistress is a designated member of a religious community whose role is to introduce novices to the spiritual life practised within their religious community. One of the tasks of the novice master was to pass on the tradition of ascetic practices to new members. These practices were characteristic of the religious community into which they chose to enter.[12] These included introducing the novitiate to the "tools of penance," such as the discipline (a whip) and in some religious congregations the "penance chains," also known as *cilice*.[13] How exactly were novices introduced to these practices? A male member of the religious congregation of the Redemptorists explains:

> I can still remember the novice master who introduced us to these practices. How did this happen? Well, you had to come, one by one, into his room and I . . . I can still hear him say, "Yes, Alphonse had to find a form of discipline [respondent chuckles] that wouldn't damage your health." (Interview quotation, September 2005)

This quotation is noteworthy, not only because of the undertone of humour, but also because it passes on a memory of the founder of the

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[11] Cf. Flood 2004:161: "The tradition is conveyed through the teacher. . . ."

[12] Cf. Monteiro (2000:84): "The novice mistress passed on to the postulates and novices the characteristic practices of the congregation" (my translation).

[13] In the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Gougaud 1953) we read that *cilice* derives from the Greek κιλίκιον, *cilicium,* which was named after a region on the southeast coast of Asia Minor where long-haired goats grazed. This goat hair was used for the coarse fabric that went into garments of penance such as hair shirts or hair girdles. The *cilice* I encountered was an *iron* version of the girdle. The same version of this chain is still in use today, for example, among members of the Catholic organization Opus Dei.

religious congregation of the Redemptorists — Saint Alfonsus Liguori (1696–1786).[14] The conveyance and thus safeguarding of these practices is linked to a powerful, legitimizing argument: founder Alfonso also practised the discipline. Yet, in many cases the legitimization of these practices was based solely on the authority of the novice master. The interviews make clear that many novice masters instructed their novices only on *how* and not *why* they had to perform certain ascetic practices. This fits in with the general idea that novices had to obey their superiors unquestioningly, regardless of what was asked.

When we come to the example of religious reading, Flood sharpens Hervieu-Léger's idea that collective memory can take the place of individual memory. Flood states that in the context of asceticism, ascetic practices (and also religious reading) serve to

> … replace personal memory with the memory of a tradition, to repress the recollection of events in a personal narrative with the collective tropes of the great, transpersonal narrative of the tradition. (Flood 2004:194)

The replacement of private by collective memory, the latter represented by a transpersonal ascetic narrative, can for instance be found in the genre of ascetic handbooks and the genre of rules and constitutions. One of the frequently used ascetic handbooks in the Netherlands was the voluminous work, *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* by the Spanish Jesuit Alphonse Rodriguez (1532–1617).[15] This book was widely read in 20th century Dutch monastic life, which is quite remarkable as it had been written more than three centuries before and was transmitted unaltered. Rodriguez constantly refers to "collective tropes" of the ascetic narrative: passages from the New Testament, the sayings of the Church Fathers, the lives of the Desert Fathers and the Saints. This is a standard and timeless repertoire found in ascetic handbooks. Although written by a Jesuit the book was also read in communities that were not Jesuit in origin. This example shows, firstly, how the

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[14] Alfonsus's form of the discipline proposed whipping the buttocks instead of the back and shoulders. For a review and psychological interpretation of the history of the discipline see Vandermeersch (2002).
[15] Rodriguez (1900). The first Dutch translation of Rodriguez's ascetic handbook appeared in 1626.

memory of ascetic tradition is transmitted by spiritual reading in — mostly male — religious communities.[16] Secondly, it shows how the collective memory is *literally* conserved by the repeated use of the same unaltered texts. This picture of "conserving memory" returns when one examines the genre of rules and constitutions.

Monastic rule was less emphasized in Dutch religious communities than the strict observance of the constitution, that is, the particular and clear-cut rules of daily life in a monastery. The observance of the constitution was an infallible means of arriving at perfection.[17] Some ascetic practices were incorporated as constitutional items. These constitutions were frequently read to the members of a religious community during suppertime in the refectory. Noteworthy is that many religious communities were living a prescribed religious life adopted without alteration from constitutions drafted centuries earlier.[18] In the case of the Redemptorists, we again see how memory is conserved: "In the constitutions of the General Chapter from 1936, translated the same year into Dutch, one comes across the view that goes back to the old Rule approved by the Pope in 1749."[19]

The descriptions in these examples point to the fact that the collective memory of ascetic tradition was institutionalized in Dutch monastic

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[16] Ascetic theology formed a small part of a complete spiritual education and was chiefly reserved for intellectual male religious communities. The interviews pinpoint a distinction made between readings *by* members and readings *for* members of religious communities. The latter was common in female religious communities; in male religious communities the members also read these books themselves.

[17] The historian José Eijt writes: "The rule was the outspoken will of God and therefore the most certain, shortest and elevated way to perfection" (Eijt 1998:294; my translation).

[18] This particular point is also interesting from the perspective of the new religious congregations established from the 19th century on. These congregations were founded in a restorative atmosphere and in drawing up their constitutions, statutes and customs "a strange mixture of traditional elements" appeared. For example, the composition of the rules of female congregations actively orientated towards works of charity was often based on earlier, contemplative rules that emphasized a rhythm of *ora et labora* inside instead of outside the monastery. For further information see Rademaker (1987); Eijt and Houtvast (2002).

[19] Van Dijk and Salemink 2000:appendix; my translation. Some religious communities revised their rules and constitutions because of the 1917 revision of Church law, but the really drastic changes first took place after the Second World War and particularly following the plea for renewal by the Second Vatican Council.

life. The important questions are: How *firmly* was this memory institutionalized? and Were the religious ideals attached to it still experienced as meaningful? These are not questions that I can fully address in this article, however, I would like to note that most of the interviews indicate a huge discrepancy between the institutionalized ascetic tradition and its subjective appropriation. This discrepancy comes most explicitly to the fore in the stories of some male and female members of religious communities, who, at the time, felt the urge to *laugh* at the idea of performing certain ascetic practices. Returning to the above examples, I think it is important to emphasize the strong sense of historical continuity (or could we say "romanticism" of the past?) that seems essential for rendering ascetic memory a somewhat immune and timeless status. In describing the subject of spiritual education a specific quality of the collective memory appears: even memories (enacted in practice and language) from "ancient times," as a male respondent put it, can remain unaltered and significant layers of memory for centuries. Specifically in this period of transition, a discrepancy between the present and its "links with the past" comes to the fore, as I will further demonstrate in examining the other two parameters, "performance" and "ambiguity."

The Performance of Ascetic Practices

In each ascetic tradition there is now, or has been, a wide variety of ascetic forms prescribed by tradition. Flood calls these "cultural habits that are the hallmarks of asceticism and can be understood as bodily performance" (Flood 2004:6). The concept of performance is important when studying a phenomenon such as asceticism. However, as a theoretical tool for understanding asceticism in transition, performance becomes relevant only when it is linked to ascetic practice and the concept of memory. Allow me to explain. In the performance of ascetic practices the collective memory of ascetic tradition either is or can be *enacted*. For example, chewing on bitter herbs before dinner to spoil one's ability to taste, conforms with the Christian ascetic tradition — one enacts or performs a collective memory of mortification, which in this context means the physical mortification of the senses that was

performed by many Christian saints. However, from the 1950s until the 1970s, we see the enactment of ascetic memory breaking down because many ascetic practices either disappeared or were officially abolished or *moderated*.[20] Moreover, during this period of transition, performance was no longer the enactment of tradition, but enactment based purely upon the authority of particular persons such as an abbot or a novice master.

As Flood indicates, the hallmarks of asceticism were not limited to corporal performances. In both my study of the historical literature and my interviews I ran into a variety of physical and mental ascetic practices prescribed by tradition.[21] Many practices performed by members of religious communities fit into the specific categories described in ascetic theology, although not all respondents used these categories themselves. The "tools of penance" such as the discipline (flagellation) and the *cilice* (wearing an iron chain) were known as voluntary practices of physical mortification aimed at the most dangerous sense: the tactile sense. One had to mortify one's flesh in order to control disorderly passions. One example of mental, or spiritual mortification that focused particularly on the "interior" sense of memory was an ascetic practice that a respondent from a female Franciscan community remembered as "becoming poor." Each person entering the novitiate brought along a small collection of personal possessions, such as photographs of family members or special objects such as a mirror. However, what the

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[20] Speaking generally, most "voluntary" corporal practices and all "humiliation" practices disappeared. Practices that were moderated include the practice of fasting and the night choir (sleep deprivation). Today the latter is performed only among the Dutch Trappists.

[21] In ascetic theology the distinction between corporal and mental ascetic practices is elaborated when the topic of *mortification* (mortification = to kill) is described. For instance, in the ascetic handbook by Tanquerey we read: "Mortification must include the whole man, body and soul; for each of our faculties unless well-disciplined may be the cause of sin." Subsequently, Tanquerey devotes a paragraph to "the mortification of the body and the exterior senses" and "mortification of the interior senses." Mortification of the body is aimed at the senses of hearing, smell, sight, taste and touch, whereas mortification of the mind focuses on the "interior" senses such as memory, fantasy and above all the "higher faculties" — the intellect and the will. See Tanquerey (1948:371).

postulants did not know was that before they entered the novitiate, the novice mistress had examined their belongings and arbitrarily removed one or two personal items that the postulant would have to distance herself from. The memory of friends and family had to be mortified, because the "old self" had to be replaced and repressed by the "new religious self" (Derks, Eijt and Monteiro 1997).

In the Dutch Franciscan monastic magazine *De Kloosterling* (The Monk) we read about mortification of the "higher faculties." In the late 1930s Father Lucidius Verschueren stated that the faculties of intellect and will can be mortified by strict obedience, by subjecting one's own will to the Will of God, or as he put it himself: "...by fulfilling the commands that our superiors have been given by God directly or indirectly by God's vicars" (Verschueren 1938a:174; my translation). I would like to draw on one concrete example. A female respondent from the order of Clara told me that she strongly disliked fish and could stand neither the smell nor the look of it. Nevertheless, during her novitiate, fish was on the menu once a week and it was the novices' job to prepare the dish. How did she cope with this? She replied with the following:

> I was rather smart back then and didn't give a hint of how awful I found it, and well, because there were nine of us there was always someone else who didn't mind. But, if you ever gave yourself away, then you absolutely *had* to do it. (Interview quotation, January 2007)

This quote gives us an insight into the theological background of spiritual mortification: if a person dislikes doing something, that is reason enough to make them do exactly that. It is a perfect opportunity for training the will. This is a good illustration of the Ignatian spirituality of *agere contra* (acting against) that was widespread in Dutch monastic life.[22]

Turning our attention to the public aspect of performance, we read that Flood also stresses this important point: "Ascetic performance is public and only makes sense in the context of community and tradition" (Flood 2004:7). In my view, this notion of the "public" can be subdivided into three groups: firstly God or Christ, then the religious

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[22] For a further account of the asceticism of Ignatius of Loyola, see Meissner (1992).

community and finally "outsiders" or non-members. The interviews show that in the performance of ascetic practices the religious community functions as the public. The Guilt Chapter practice illustrates this explicitly. This was done once a week in the Chapter room, in public, and was meant to give members the opportunity to confess their personal transgressions of the Rule. After confessing a transgression, such as breaking a small cup or talking during the *silentium* (the observance of silence) they might have to prostrate themselves on the ground until a superior gave a sign for them to rise (among the female Dominicans this act was called *venia*). Alternatively, they might be summoned to kiss the feet of all their fellow brothers or sisters at the end of a meal in the refectory. It is at the intersection of these three types of public exhibition that the parameter of performance can be widened by focusing on performance in the sense of *achievement*.

At least four of my respondents (two male and two female) experienced the performance of ascetic practices as a kind of achievement. Speaking of that time and in that respect, they said they were pleased with themselves for being able to bear the hardships of everyday monastic life, including such physically demanding ascetic practices as fasting. On this topic a male Trappist commented:

> But the danger is that, um, it can turn into a bit of a moral achievement, you know, whereby you actually find yourself face to face with God in the sense of, if I do this, then you must do that, you know, something like that. It's a bit like, yeah, a kind of refined pride... like saying we are the most observant order because we eat only one sandwich a day... you know. That's the way it used to go. (Interview quotation, January 2007)

It is important to note that this respondent shifts from the 'me versus God' perspective to the collective identity — "we." The morality of achievement presumes that acts are not only public in relation to a righteous, judging God who is *increasingly* pleased by *increasing* asceticism, but also in relation to the religious community in question where an atmosphere of competition prompts increasingly fierce asceticism. Significant is that the respondent quoted verbalises the experience of achievement as one that contradicts the aim of systematic ascetic training. On the spiritual level, there was the danger of what is sophisticatedly called 'refined pride' and that pride was a capital sin. The

performance of asceticism was directed at breaking down pride; however, the sense of achievement, as in "look at me, it's hard but I'm doing it!" is precisely *contrary* to this intention.[23]

Although the third kind of public, the non-member(s), was more in the background, it still has significance for understanding ascetic practice. The distinction between lay people and members of religious communities is in this context important. All Christians had to strive for perfection; however, it was widely acclaimed — at least before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) — that members of religious communities had the best chances of attaining perfection (Monteiro 2000:358). In addition to their vocation and taking the three monastic vows, they used the so-called "particular means," including prayer *and* ascetic practices. In this sense, male and female religious distinguished themselves from lay people in their ascetic performance, a distinction which was further visible in their clothing and often secluded life. This act of distinguishing oneself from others contributed to a strengthening sense of both individual and communal asceticism.

As we have seen, performance presupposes a three-layered public, but performance also has a public character. The public character of ascetic performance is important because of its particular function: the ascetic way of life included ascetic performance that could motivate people to join a religious community. However, it was this part of the ascetic way of life that was more or less kept secret from the outside public.

The Practice of Secrecy and the Ascetic Self

One of the outcomes of the interviews is that most of the eighteen respondents did not know beforehand — before entering their religious

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[23] This experience of achievement can be related to expressions such as "earning heaven" or "achieving something for God" and is also described by the historian Marjet Derks with respect to the case of a Dutch female religious community. In this case, achievement is related to extraordinary heroism. See Derks 2007:201. At the moment I am also working on an article that focuses on the relationship between a sense of superiority ("pride") and mortification practices. The morality of achievement is one of the core issues that comes to the fore in this specific context. In this article I also discuss what I call the "paradox of mortification"; practices aimed at humility causing pride.

community — that they were going to have to perform specific ascetic practices. The passing on of ascetic practices was a somewhat strange affair. All the respondents were obviously aware of some practices such as fasting and of the broader ascetic context involved in a demanding daily programme. Religious orders such as the male and female Trappists and Passionists were reputed to be highly "observant," thus, people entering these communities must have had certain expectations of the rigours involved. Nevertheless, especially during the novitiate, members of religious communities had no choice but to endure many practices of which they had never previously heard. For instance, all my respondents were introduced to the discipline.[24] Some of them had read about this practice in spiritual literature such as biographies of the founder of their religious community or saints' lives, but most knew nothing about it. Regardless of foreknowledge, all were surprised. One male Franciscan said:

> Yes, well, most of us, most people really didn't know. Even the ones with older brothers in the order, they had never heard of it. . . . They were secretive about it. Also, it was only practised at a time of day when no other people were in the monastery. (Interview quotation, July 2007)

This same mystery holds for the use of the *cilice*, although this ascetic practice was less widespread. Specific humiliation rituals were also concealed until somebody had entered the novitiate.

This information — which I call the practice of secrecy — sheds a different light on the idea of "the ascetic self." Flood describes the ascetic self on the basis of the scriptural tradition. In the texts that Flood analyses we come across an ascetic self which is already "shaped" by ascetic tradition, whereas the practice of secrecy taps into the beginnings of what Flood calls "the process whereby the self becomes an ascetic self" (Flood 2004:211). The thought of such a "process" must be approached critically in the context of 20th century Dutch monastic asceticism, because the practice of secrecy demonstrates that the choice of a monastic life did not necessarily mean opting for an *ascetic* life. This insight is

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[24] With the exception of the active female religious congregation of Dominicans of Neerbosch, in which the practice of the discipline disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century.

supported by the interviews. Only two respondents — one male and one female Trappist — entered their religious community with an explicit ascetic ideal, whereas the remainder indicated other religious ideals, such as a longing for God or, specific to male religious congregations, the desire to become a priest. This demonstrates that for many members of religious communities the "process" of becoming an ascetic self was not something originally intended, but rather something encountered only *after* entering monastic life. It is in the context of answering this specific question of what happened to the formation of the ascetic self *after* people entered monastic life, that Flood's third parameter, "the ambiguity of the ascetic self," will be examined.

Oral History and the Ambiguity of the Ascetic Self

Flood argues that the ambiguity of the ascetic self lies in the subjugation of the self on the one hand and the prioritizing of the self that is stressed in the determinacy of the will on the other. The "I will" of the ascetic intention simultaneously seeks to erase itself (Flood 2004:13–16). According to Flood the ultimate religious goal in Christian asceticism is "the passivity of the self in which the self's will is replaced by the divine will" (Flood 2004:13). The subjugation of the self can be inferred from Catholic spiritual literature and the oral history. However, the concept of "ambiguity" necessarily implies personal determinacy, which contradicts the personal experiences of the respondents I have interviewed. Their experiences reveal a tension between prescribed and lived practice.

In the ascetic training of members of Dutch religious communities, subjugation of the self played an important role. The performance of what I call "humiliation" practices provides a good illustration. These practices were specifically aimed at breaking the will of members of religious communities. In an interview with a male respondent from the religious congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart, we talked about how subjugation of the self was made part of his spiritual education. This respondent said:

> Well, look, um, you were expected to be obedient and put aside your own opinion, you know, not argue. You had to be in want of things, you know, you had to

be able to renounce things. And, well, you had to train in all of this and so the novice master made us perform certain practices, you know, in order to belittle people, yes. (Interview quotation, February 2007)

A female respondent from the order of the Trappists commented on the same topic:

> Well, you know, in the old days it was the custom to be humiliated. You were not allowed to laugh, you had to become humble. You had to try and become a good religious person, and in your own small way you had to start becoming a saint [respondent laughs softly]. This was only possible if you were belittled. (Interview quotation, February 2007)[25]

These two quotes and other material from the interviews underscore that subjugation of the self — understood as the "breaking of the will" enacted in humiliation rituals — was a major theme in 20th century Dutch monastic life in both female and male religious communities.[26] The leading theological thread is the mortification of the will through strict obedience, sometimes tested to the limits in order to "break the will" or "belittle the ego" of members of religious communities. The primary means of attaining this goal was practising the virtue of humility or, to put it differently, humiliation rituals.[27] In relation to the formation of the ascetic self, an important question still remains: Did members entering religious communities without an ascetic intention develop the ambiguity of the ascetic self after entering their religious community?

The general conclusion that I infer from the interviews is that the personal experiences of respondents do not conform with the experience

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[25] It is important to note that in this quote the respondent uses both the words "humiliation" and "humble"; humiliation practices were based upon the virtue of humility. Thus, the humiliation of members of religious communities was set in a specific theological context.

[26] In this respect there are interesting differences between male and female religious communities. For example, only some of the female respondents expressed the idea of being "a child again with a new mother." Some male spiritual authors were concerned about the "infantile atmosphere" in certain female religious communities. However, I will not go further into these differences.

[27] For example, this was reflected in the ideas of executive members of religious communities who understood the novitiate not only as a reciprocal test period, but also as a *probatio*, that is, a trial. See Dorren 2007:111–12.

of ambiguity. For example, talking about their experiences of humiliation rituals, many respondents were more or less negative. They described their experiences as "strange," "odd," "unhealthy," "out of date," "unnatural" and "humiliating." Some respondents had serious doubts, difficulties or even psychological suspicions concerning the performance of both humiliation rituals and corporal ascetic practices. Although the experiences of the eighteen respondents varied, the main feeling they reported experiencing at that time was an acceptance not usually based on inner consent. Instead of the spiritual interpretation Flood proposes (eliminating the will), I encountered in this transitional period diverse *pragmatic* attitudes to the performance of humiliation rituals. Respondents accepted these practices as a fact of their religious life, as customs and habits characteristic of religious life. Because life became less restrictive after the novitiate these practices were "just knocks one had to take in fulfilling one's religious ideal," as one Passionist metaphorically described it (interview quotation, September 2005). Instead of the experience of ambiguity, there was a tension between religious ideals and concrete monastic life, which rose to its peak during the one or two-year period of the novitiate.[28]

During the novitiate the novice master and the superior of the community determined a great deal of the spiritual life of the novices. As Flood also indicates, the direct contact with a teacher or spiritual father/mother is important in ascetic life. However, the system of tutelage in 20th century monastic life was often experienced completely differently to Flood's description of the "dialogical nature of the teacher-student relationship" (Flood 2004:160). The interviews show that almost no dialogue was involved in the novitiate, instead there was generally an acceptance of prescribed practices which were *imposed* on people. The elimination of the will was imposed on members of religious communities as opposed to Flood's idea of choosing as an individual to eliminate your own will. During this period of transition in Dutch monastic life members of religious communities had to strictly obey specific figures of authority such as the novice master, but also the abbot or prior who prescribed the ascetic tradition. As many respondents also indicated,

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[28] After the novitiate, religious life became less restrictive, especially in active congregations where duties outside the community moderated the intensity of asceticism.

until the 1960s there was no place for individual spirituality, everyone had to follow the same rules and orders without exception. Emphasis was on the whole community, which often resulted in a rigid formalism. The idea of the "I will" of the ascetic self is put so completely in the background that one wonders if it was actually possible to assert one's own will, except in praying to God for strength and grace. Again, rather than the ambiguity of the ascetic self, a tension between religious ideals and self-subjugation is evident which was not experienced as a spiritual opportunity, but as a burden.

The fact that the third parameter of "ambiguity" does not fully match the research data inferred from oral history is due to the fact that one necessary condition for its formation was not met: the ambiguity of the ascetic self depends upon the subjective appropriation of ascetic tradition. Without the personal internalization of the collective memory of ascetic tradition the experience of ambiguity is unattainable: the "I will" is lacking. This brings us back to the concept of memory. Flood writes: "The process whereby the self becomes an ascetic self must be understood as the subjective appropriation of tradition" (Flood 2004:212). It is exactly the failure of appropriation of the collective memory of ascetic tradition that becomes fully manifest in Dutch monastic life after the 1950s.[29]

What Happened Afterwards?

To this point I have focused primarily on asceticism in a period of transition, but at the conclusion of this article it may be worthwhile to discuss a nuance of opinion or feeling that may have arisen since this period. One wonders if asceticism has entirely disappeared from Dutch monastic life. Have the "old" forms of asceticism possibly been replaced

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[29] Nevertheless, a minority of respondents did grow into the ascetic way of life after entering monastic life. Moreover, many respondents referred in their interviews to the ascetic life of the older generation, that is, people living at the beginning of the 20th century. I think that an exploration of Flood's concept of ambiguity in relation to this period would greatly enhance the results, although personal interviews with this generation are obviously no longer possible. In the case of two or three respondents who I personally interviewed, one can definitely speak of a subjective appropriation of the ascetic tradition. I will return to this point in the conclusion.

by new forms that are as meaningful to the generation with experience of the "old" practices? One of the last questions in my interviews was to ask whether respondents still use the terms asceticism or mortification. A few answered that they would rather not, because of the negative connotations. Most respondents, however, still talk about asceticism or mortification but in a very specific way. In the research data, I came across the idea of the *unsought cross*.

Diverse respondents indicated that since their religious communities had either modified or abolished the *silentium*, the new situation demanded a *new* asceticism. This involved being receptive to other people's opinions and ideas, and dealing with personal views which one had never heard before. Instead of performing ascetic practices — also called self-sought asceticism — today one has to endure unsought asceticism or simply bear the sufferings of everyday life. This not only includes living one's life in a community, but also "the suffering that simply lands on your plate. That headache you always get and the operations you need and all of those dreary things that come across your path, all the things that happen to you" (from an interview with a Jesuit, March 2007). In religious terms this is known as bearing the "unsought cross."[30]

Conclusion

Beginning with a brief sketch of Dutch monastic asceticism after the 1950s, I explored Gavin Flood's three parameters of asceticism in more detail to examine if the concepts of memory, performance and ambiguity are good tools for understanding asceticism in a period of transition. The concept of memory as the appropriation of ascetic tradition has proven to be fruitful. The key argument in this article is that within 20th century Dutch monastic life a "failure" of the subjective appropriation of the collective memory of ascetic tradition can be seen, and it became fully manifest after the 1950s. The examples of spiritual education indicate that on the one hand the performance of collective memory was still institutionalized, but on the other hand this memory

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[30] Social interpretation is another type of asceticism that I encountered. While the unsought cross is still directed at the individual, social interpretation shifts attention from one's own suffering to the suffering of others.

rapidly declined at both the institutional and personal levels. The disappearance of many ascetic practices from Dutch monastic life in only three decades is the most striking example of this decline.

In examining the last parameter, "the ambiguity of the ascetic self," I concentrated mostly on oral history, using research data derived from the eighteen interviews. In conclusion, the personal experiences of the respondents generally contradict Gavin Flood's description of ambiguity. Although the eradication of the will is recognizable in the research material, the subjective appropriation of the religious ideal of the subjugation of the will is generally absent. Instead of ambiguity, most of the respondents experienced a tension between their own religious ideals and concrete monastic life which often eased after finishing the novitiate. This tension can be connected to the decline of collective memory: without the personal internalization of the religious ideal of subjugation, the experience of ambiguity is impossible.

Nevertheless, I encountered cases where people *did* grow into an ascetic life after entering their religious community. In these rare cases, two questions concerning the parameter of ambiguity need further exploration. Firstly, what exactly is the range of the parameter of "ambiguity"? How do specific physical ascetic practices such as the use of the discipline or sleep deprivation correspond — or not — to the experience of ambiguity?[31] Furthermore, the goal of Christian asceticism which Flood describes as "the passivity of the self in which the self's will is replaced by the divine will" (Flood 2004:13) needs to be further specified. From a psychological perspective one can pose the question: What exactly is broken down when one talks about "breaking down" or "eradicating" the will?

Finally, I described the example of the "unsought cross" that illustrates a reconfiguration of asceticism. The spiritual slogan is that instead of voluntarily seeking asceticism, one must endure the suffering that

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[31] In the chapter entitled "Asceticism in Action" (Flood 2004:81–84), Flood links the formation of the *ascetic self* to physical ascetic performance. Nevertheless, physical asceticism (work) is linked to the parameter of the *ambiguity* of the ascetic self only in the case of Simone Weil. This would indicate a link between subjugation and performing physical practices. In my view, practices such as fasting and the discipline have a different meaning to subjugation or self-subjugation and therefore also a different psychological effect than that of ambiguity.

God sends His people. However, this is not to say that the performance of voluntarily asceticism has entirely faded from Dutch monastic life as it can still be found in small private practices, such as the contemporary mortifications described by a female respondent from the Dominicans, in a quotation with which I would like to conclude:

> For example, at table I've taken on the mortification of never using salt or adding anything extra, and I also try, um, to restrain my curiosity. These are mortifications you can do, say, when you hear a car approaching and wonder "Who could that be?" but I don't try to see. These are the kind of thing that I see these days, the mortification of small things, and no one else needs to know. (Interview, July 2007)

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Interview with a female Trappist, February 2007
Interview with a Jesuit, March 2007
Interview with a female Franciscan, March 2007
Interview with a female Dominican, July 2007
Interview with a male Franciscan, July 2007

On the State and Prospects of the Study of Zoroastrianism

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Abstract

The academic study of Zoroastrianism goes back to the seventeenth century. It was a classic topic in the History of Religions as an academic discipline throughout its formative period. Zoroastrianism has become less visible on the field of the History of Religions since the 1970s. This, however, does not mean that there was no progress in Zoroastrian Studies since that time. Quite to the contrary, despite the customary tendency to paint a gloomy picture of the progress of Zoroastrian Studies, scholarship in this field has advanced considerably in recent decades. The present article sketches eighteen major subjects of innovative recent research activities. Topics include textual studies, law, astrology, secondary sources, religion and politics, regional diversity, marginalization, impact on and interaction with other religious traditions, the modern communities in India, Iran, and various "diasporic" settings as well as gender, rituals, and outside reception. The article concludes by sketching some prospects for the study of Zoroastrianism.

> … 'finality' is as dangerous a thing in scholarship as in politics.
> (Max Müller [1867:137])

Introduction: The Study of Zoroastrianism and the History of Religions[1]

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest living religions in the world. It has a very rich history and was the dominant religious tradition of pre-Islamic Iran. Zoroastrians lived in close neighbourhood to adherents of various other religions such as Jews, Christians, Manicheans, Buddhists, and others. It is generally held that Zoroastrianism made an impact on several of these religions — as well as on Islam in its formative period. The (presumed) widespread influence of Zoroastrianism on neighbouring religions is probably one of the main reasons why several generations of scholars have shown an interest in this religion.[2]

The spread of Islam led to the marginalization of Zoroastrianism in Iran and promoted its relocation to the Indian subcontinent. Nowadays, the majority of Zoroastrians (probably some 130,000 worldwide) are living in Western India. Sizeable groups of Zoroastrians are to be found in Iran (where the religion is an officially recognised religious minority) as well as in England, Canada, the United States, the Gulf States, and Australia. There are smaller groups in various other countries.

The study of Zoroastrianism as an academic enterprise harks back to the beginnings of Orientalism in the late 17th century. The first book on ancient Iranian religion was published by Thomas Hyde, an Oxford scholar of Arabic, Semitic, and Persian, in 1700 (Stroumsa 2002). The book also contained the first translation of a late, but important Persian Zoroastrian text in a European language. These early studies were still firmly grounded in biblical and apologetic presuppositions (Stausberg 1998a, 2001). The study of the oldest Zoroastrian scripture began as a result of the Orientalist expedition of the French scholar Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron (Stausberg 1998b) and his *Le Zend-Avesta* from

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[1] For a comprehensive review of the study of Zoroastrianism (including reflections on its disintegrated state, short profiles of main protagonists, a discussion of some attempts to map main approaches and the contribution of Zoroastrians and Iranians as well as the impact of the study of Zoroastrianism on modern Zoroastrianism), see my chapter in the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to Scholarship in Religious Studies* (edited by Gregory Alles).

[2] See Sundermann (2008:163): "The fact that Zoroastrianism inspired and enriched other religions in many ways allows us to call the religion of Zoroaster a world religion."

1771. Its philological bases solidified with the establishment of comparative Indo-European linguistics in the first half of the 19th century.

As is well-known, Friedrich Max Müller tried to adapt the scholarly program of the science of language to establish a new science of religion (Müller 1873). Müller was of course familiar with the linguistic studies of the ancient Zoroastrian texts that had been carried out by Burnouf, Haug, Spiegel, and others. Several essays reviewing these studies, assembled in the first volume of his *Chips from a German Workshop*, bear witness to the great interest Müller took in the contemporaneous development of Zoroastrian Studies (Müller 1867:81–103, 118–180). This is hardly surprising, since "next to Sanskrit, there is no more ancient language than Zend — and that, next to the Veda, there is, among the Aryan nations, no more primitive religious code than the Zend-Avesta" (Müller 1867:119–120).

Alongside the continued specialist philological and linguistic study of the Zoroastrian texts (for a partial history see Kellens [2006]), several of the leading protagonists of the nascent field, or "science," of the History of Religions partly built their careers around writing on Zoroastrianism. Consider the following cases.[3] In 1864, long before his doctorate and eventual appointment to the chair in Leiden (1877), Cornelis Petrus Tiele published a book with the title *De godsdienst van Zarathustra: van haar ontstaan in Baktrië tot den val van het Oud-Perzische Rijk (The Religion of Zarathustra: From its Origin in Bactria to the Fall of the Ancient Persian Empire)* (Tiele 1864). When still at Oslo, in the autumn term 1898 William Brede Kristensen (who would eventually succeed Tiele on the Leiden chair) lectured on Zoroastrianism (Ruud 1998:284), but he never published a book on the subject. Nathan Söderblom, the first Swedish scholar of the History of Religions, was trained in Iranian studies in Paris and wrote his early scholarly works on Zoroastrianism (Söderblom 1899, 1901) before obtaining the first chair in the field in Sweden (in Uppsala). In 1912 Söderblom was called to the new chair in the History of Religions in Leipzig, while the Berlin chair had already been occupied by the Danish scholar Edvard Lehmann in 1910. Lehmann, who would shortly thereafter move to Lund (Sweden), had

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[3] See Stausberg (2007a) for the early history of the study of religion(s) in Western Europe.

likewise largely gained his scholarly reputation with a work on Zoro-
aster and ancient Iranian religion (Lehmann 1899–1902). Söderblom
and Lehmann were not only friends, but also shared a firm Protestant
belief and to some extent an apologetic agenda. This was not the case
with the Italian historian of religions Raffaele Pettazzoni. Although
mostly known for his comparative studies and his work on Mediterra-
nean religions, a couple of years before the establishment of his chair at
the University of Rome in 1923 Pettazzoni also published a book on
the history of ancient Zoroastrianism (Pettazzoni 1920). None of these
works, however, have had a lasting impact on the specialist study of
Iranian religions. The one historian of religions who was as much as a
specialist as a generalist was Pettazzoni's successor as president of the
International Association for the History of Religions, the Swede Geo
Widengren, whose work situated Iranian religions firmly within Near
Eastern religious history.

Zoroastrianism in *Numen*

It is a telling sign of the status earlier held by the study of Zoroastrianism
in the History of Religions that the content of the first two numbers of
this journal (*Numen* 1954 and 1955) was, at least page-wise, dominated
by two lengthy articles by Widengren entitled "Stand und Aufgaben der
iranischen Religionsgeschichte" ("The Present State and Future Tasks of
the Study of Iranian Religious History"). The collated text of the two
articles of 68 and 88 pages respectively was published as a separate book
by Brill in 1955. Contrary to what its title might suggest, the text is less
a survey of the state of the art of the study of Iranian religions; it rather
unfolds Widengren's own view, which he later revised into a survey work
(Widengren 1965). The first article starts with a (still valid) plea for com-
bining philological and historical approaches to the study of pre-Islamic
religion and proceeds to presenting an extensive "phenomenological"
survey of such issues as cosmology, the belief in supreme deities ("Hoch-
gottglaube," one of Widengren's favourite ideas), the concepts of soul,
eschatology and apocalypticism (two of his main fields of interest), pri-
mordial figures and saviours, myths and legends, cult and ritual including
annual festivals (a hobbyhorse of the so-called Uppsala school) and other
rites (e.g. sacrifice), cultic and secret societies (another Uppsala idea),

priests, cultic places and temples, oral and written transmission and sacred kingship (again promoting interpretations peculiar to the Uppsala school). At the end of his first article, Widengren points to the lack of comprehensive studies on ethics in Iranian religiosity and on forms of prayer among Iranian peoples (Widengren 1954:83).[4] The second article changes from the phenomenological to the historical mode. The bulk of the article is a reconstruction of what Widengren considered as the main epochs of pre-Islamic religious history and their features, including an extensive discussion of the religious "type" and message of Zoroaster and various digressions about the influence Iranian religion (rather than Zoroastrianism in a stricter sense) exerted on its neighbours. This last point is the topic of the much shorter third part of the article (Widengren 1955:128–132).[5] Widengren concludes by inviting his fellow scholars to pay particular attention to the rich treasures of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) literature.[6]

Shortly after Widengren's book-length articles, *Numen* featured an article about the date and teaching of Zarathustra by the Reverend C.F. Whitley (1957). A little later, the journal published an exchange between the Slovenian/Polish Iranologist Marijan Molé and his Belgian adversary Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (Duchesne-Guillemin 1961; Molé 1961) prompted by the former's structural-eschatological interpretation of ancient Iranian religion (e.g. Molé 1960). At the same time, the American Iranologist Richard Frye discussed Dumézil's theory and

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[4] There still is no comprehensive scholarly study of Zoroastrian ethics and morality, but see Kreyenbroek (1997); Gignoux (2000/2001).

[5] As Ab de Jong reminded me, Widengren was the main protagonist of an "Iranian/Zoroastrian" interpretation of the origins of Manichaeism (see Widengren 1961a). The pendulum has since swung to an interpretation favouring Christian backgrounds. More recent scholarship has pointed to (among other things) Iranian/Zoroastrian elements in Manichaean terminology (Colditz 2000), ritual (BeDuhn 2002), or prophetology (Sundermann 2004) as well as the polemical interactions between both religions (Sundermann 2001b, 2001c) and their use of identical deities and demons (e.g. Sundermann 2003) or mythological adaptations on the side of Manichaeism (Sundermann 2008:160–161). For reviews of the discussion on the Iranian/Zoroastrian elements in Zoroastrianism see Rudolph (1992:66–79); Skjærvø (1995); Sundermann (2001a:39–58).

[6] The re-evaluation of the importance of the Pahlavi sources resonates with the work of scholars like Molé, Zaehner, and Boyce.

its application to Avestan studies (followed up by Kuiper 1961), and Kurt Rudolph presented an insightful review of the discussion about the religious "type" of Zarathustra (Rudolph 1961). Further articles published during the 1960s were by Jacob Neusner (1965), Marina Vesci (1968), and John Hinnells (1969).

From the year 1970 onwards, however, Zoroastrianism disappeared as an object of study in its own right from the pages of the journal. While it is mentioned in some general articles or in articles on neighbouring religions such as Manichaeism, with one partial exception (Hasenfratz [1983] on different forms of dualism in Iran),[7] no more articles on Zoroastrianism were published in *Numen* after 1969![8] This is an impressive testimony to the marginalization of Zoroastrian Studies in our scholarly field.[9] The readers of this journal may therefore benefit from an account of the more recent development of the study of Zoroastrianism. General sources of information are the obvious point to start with.

Surveys and Introductions

Before my own trilogy (Stausberg 2002a, 2002b, 2004)[10] no general extensive survey work had been published since the 1960s (Zaehner

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[7] The essay by Hasenfratz has largely remained unnoticed in more specialized studies. Fore recent discussions of the classical question of Zoroastrian "theology" in terms of dualism/monotheism/polytheism see Stausberg (2003); Hultgård (2004); Panaino (2004a); Kellens (2005: a discussion of previous interpretations); Kreyenbroek (2006).

[8] Since the mid 1990s Manfred Hutter and the present author at least contributed a series of reviews of some relevant books from this field.

[9] Taking a look at other journals in the study of religion(s) does not change the picture much. Just like *Numen, History of Religions* published several articles on Iran/Zoroastrianism in the 1960s, but then it disappears, with two exceptions in the 1980s (Darrow 1987; Lincoln 1988). In addition Zoroastrianism was featured in Lincoln's Indo-European studies published in that journal from the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the early years of the present millennium, Lincoln returned to Zoroastrian issues in relation to his critique of the validity of the Indo-European hypothesis (Lincoln 2001) and in relation to his new interest in the Empire of the Achaemenians (for a synthesis see now Lincoln [2007]). A further article that appeared in *HR* is Moazami (2005). *Religion* published merely one article on Zoroastrianism in its entire history (Williams 1989).

[10] The first volume reviews Zoroastrian history from the origins to the pre-colonial periods in India and Iran. The second volume presents a survey of the modern

1961; Duchesne-Guillemin 1962; Widengren 1965).[11] The monumental *History of Zoroastrianism* by Mary Boyce, the towering figure of Zoroastrian studies in the last decades of the 20th century, is still incomplete.[12] Three volumes are hitherto published (Boyce 1975 [3rd ed. 1996], 1982; Boyce and Grenet 1991). The work is currently being continued by the Dutch historian of ancient religions Albert de Jong (Leiden), but the remaining three to four volumes will certainly take another decade, if not much more, to be completed.

Mary Boyce has also written a masterly survey of Zoroastrian history (1979 with several reprints) which is often used as a textbook. Other introductory textbooks are thematically arranged (Clark 1998; Stausberg 2005 [English edition in preparation]). Readers seeking introductory information will naturally consult the entries in encyclopedias such as the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (all entries on Zoroastrianism revised in the second edition) or the *Brill Dictionary of Religion* and handbooks of the History of Religions, world religions, or ancient religion (far too many to even list here).

There exists neither a scholarly handbook of Zoroastrianism nor a specialist journal or an encyclopedia. However, the monumental *Encyclopædia Iranica* (1982 ff.) provides a plethora of relevant entries for the specialists. In recent years, the continued publication of fascicles is supplemented by online-publication of articles scheduled for later volumes with open access (www.iranica.com).

Collections of source materials are obviously highly useful for teaching purposes (and for research for the non-specialist). Specimens of that

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developments in India and Iran as well as the emergence of world-wide Zoroastrian communities; it also sketches Mazdasnan and discusses issues of gender. The third volume presents the total spectrum of Zoroastrian rituals (rites, liturgies, festivals) as they are practiced in India and Iran. It is supplemented by two CDs containing pictures and short videos of Zoroastrian rituals.

[11] The most up to date and complete survey on Zoroastrian history available in English was edited by two upper class Parsi ladies from Mumbai (Godrej and Mistree 2002). The book contains 41 chapters (by 36 authors including scholars, priests, community activists and lay-scholars) addressing a vast variety of topics. The sheer number and superb quality of the more than 1,000 illustrations (some conveniently assembled from previous publications, but many original) will grant this volume a lasting place in the libraries of Zoroastrian scholars.

[12] A collection of her essays is in preparation for a reprint series.

genre are available in English (Zaehner 1956 [several later editions]; Malandra 1983; Boyce 1984 [latest reprint 2006]), German (Widengren 1961b), Danish (Barr and Asmussen 1997), and Norwegian (Skjærvø 2003a). The selection of texts naturally mirrors the research interests of the translators. The volume by Boyce is unique since it also includes modern source materials as well as modern Western secondary sources. The website www.avesta.org (administered by an American "convert" to the religion) has over the years developed into a veritable archive of Zoroastrian scriptures, but its scholarly value is limited since it mainly uses dated translations and transcriptions.

Personality Clashes and Gloomy Pictures

It is part of the self-awareness of most scholars of Zoroastrianism that the past scholarly debates in our field were exceptionally violent (see e.g. Hinnells 2000:23; Kellens 2003:213). Moreover, it is customary to paint a gloomy picture of the state of affairs in the study of Zoroastrianism. I think both views need qualification.

The first concern, it seems to me, mainly bears witness to the isolation of Zoroastrian studies. For I doubt whether the debates in our field have been any more tumultuous than those in the study of, say, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam. However, as Albert de Jong has reminded me (personal communication), it may well be that several leading scholars of Zoroastrianism were prone to attacks *ad hominem.* Moreover, as de Jong also points out, the very limited size of the active scholarly community often implies that criticizing an idea to some extent may be taken as criticizing a specific person. For these reasons even relatively minor scholarly disagreements may result in personality clashes (and vice versa).

Turning to the second point, institutional prospects by and large tend to be grim for the kind of studies we are engaged in (at least in Europe), and contemporary scholars all have their limitations just as much as their predecessors did (only that those of the latter tend to be forgotten, while one is by nature constantly reminded of one's own shortcomings). At least to my eyes, a dispassionate review of scholarly work during the past two decades reveals several bright spots. I would even go so far as to say that the field has been as vibrant during this period as never before in its history.

A Catalogue of Areas of Innovative Research

At the danger of a fairly subjective selection and taking the risk of offending some colleagues who might feel that their work should have been featured more prominently, let me point out some major achievements. The following is my (sic!) selection of eighteen major areas of innovative research activities during the past two decades.[13] "Major" here refers not only to the relative importance of the areas, but also to the degree of scholarly commitment to these subjects. The following list does as a rule not include topics that may well require further study, but on which relatively little has been published so far. This includes work on topics such as conceptions of the body (Williams 1989), food regulations (Gignoux 1994), medicine and anthropology in general (Gignoux 2001), animals (Moozami 2005), as well as ethics and morality in Zoroastrianism (see above note 3).

The following catalogue is not arranged according to priority, but roughly follows a chronological order with regard to the history of Zoroastrianism. All scholarly work (including my own) is subject to criticism and necessarily of uneven quality, but as much as I can I have resisted the temptation to be judgmental and dismissive. In view of restrictions of space these areas of research can only be touched upon very briefly and all would require extensive critical discussion and contextualization. A critical discussion of the work outlined in the following pages would have required a series of articles running at least into the same length as Widengren's in the early issues of this journal.[14]

In many cases only some key works will be highlighted from a much wider bibliography.[15] The following catalogue is more than a mere bibliographical repertory because it sketches developments in scholarship and points to areas of scholarship that implicitly or explicitly have

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[13] There is no hard dividing line here, but in general more recent works are emphasized more.

[14] Note that my focus here is on the one hand more narrow than Widengren's, who was interested in Iranian pre-Islamic religious history in a much wider sense (including e.g. Manichaeism); on the other hand my focus is broader since Widengren was not at all interested in the modern periods.

[15] In the following account, only in cases where relatively little other original research has been done have I added references to my trilogy.

challenged or changed received notions of Zoroastrianism. The areas
covered do not therefore amount to a phenomenological or historical
map. Note also that scholarship on only indirectly relevant areas such
as the origins of the Indo-Iranians, Indo-Iranian poetry, the political,
social, economic, and cultural history of ancient and Islamic Iran as
well as of colonial and post-colonial India, postcolonial diasporas, or
even purely philological studies (often of single words or verses) with-
out direct relevance for the study of religion will not be touched upon.
However, the lines between direct and indirect importance are often
blurred, and other authors would naturally have made different
choices.[16] Diacritics are used sparingly throughout this article.

1. Zarathustra and the Old Avestan Texts

The distinction between two layers within the corpus of texts usually
assembled in "the Avesta"[17] has been one of the main impulses of the
modern study of Zoroastrianism since the second half of the 19th Cen-
tury (Haug, Spiegel, Darmesteter). Roughly a century later, the so-
called Erlangen school (which is not a school in a proper sense) has
placed the study of the *Gāthās* on a new linguistic and philological
basis. Helmut Humbach's translation from 1959 was a watershed (see
Kellens 2006). Johanna Narten's study of the second main text in the
so-called Old Avestan language, the *Yasna Haptanhāiti*, published in
1986, has widened the view of the Old Avestan corpus.[18] Around the

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[16] See also Cantera (2002) for an excellent up-to-date bibliography listing 484 items
published since 1975 grouped into the following twelve categories: 1. handbooks and
general accounts; 2. primary sources; 3. the figure of Zarathuštra and his religious
reform; 4. the religion of the Achaemenians; 5. doctrines (including dualism, deities,
protology, eschatology, and apocalypticism, as well as Zoroastrianism and forms of
social organization such as kingship, tri-functionalism, law, and miscellaneous items);
6. rites, cult, and ritual practices; 7. mythology; 8. astrology and astronomy; 9. Zoro-
astrianism outside of Iran; 10. Zoroastrianism in the modern period; 11. heresies, sects,
and political history of the Sasanians; 12. influence on and contacts with other reli-
gions. Cantera provides very brief introductions to these topics, sometimes garnished
with his own evaluations or short comments on the development of scholarship.

[17] For the name *Avesta* see now Sundermann (2001d) with the interesting hypothesis
of a Christian inspiration of the word (meaning "testament").

[18] See now Hintze (2007a) for an English edition cum commentary by a former stu-
dent of Narten.

year 1990 substantial new translations with commentaries were published (Kellens and Pirart 1988, 1990, 1991; Humbach 1991; Humbach and Ichaporia 1994). Especially the interpretations of the Belgian philologists Kellens and Pirart have challenged a number of assumptions that were hitherto taken for granted (except those, of course, on which their own approach was based).[19] Their claim that Zoroaster could have been neither the reciter nor the author of the *Gāthās*[20] is the most provocative of their reinterpretations,[21] and has created quite some stir.[22]

At Berkeley, Martin Schwartz is engaged in a new systematic interpretation of the *Gāthās* based on structural elements in the composition of the texts (Schwartz 2002 [2006]). From a different philological point of view this approach has been derided (in oral communication at a recent conference) as "Cabalistic." Based on insights from the study of other literatures, the Dutch scholar Philip Kreyenbroek (based in Göttingen) and the Norwegian scholar Prods Oktor Skjærvø (based at Harvard) have emphasized the oral character of the Avestan texts (Kreyenbroek 1996, 2006; Skjærvø 2005–2006), which accordingly would necessitate other interpretative approaches. The ritual dimension of the texts has been strongly emphasized by Humbach, Kellens and Pirart, and more recently by Skjærvø (2002, 2003b). Panaino, however, has at the same time pointed out that a ritualist interpretation should not be taken to a priori exclude speculative, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of the texts (Panaino 2004b).

The textual chronology of the Avestan corpus,[23] especially with regard to the status of what is generally referred to as Old and Young Avestan

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[19] See Hultgård (2000a) for a discussion of a number of key issues. He also compares the discussions around the year 1900 to the debate in the late 20th century. See Shaked (2005:189–199) for a critical discussion of what he perceives as "an excessive reliance on the linguistic data of the Rigveda" (189) amongst the scholars of the so-called Erlangen school. Shaked believes that their methodological premises are "likely to lead to a distortion of the contents and message of the Gathas" (189).

[20] See Stausberg (2007b) for the modern invention/discovery of Zarathustra's authorship of the *Gāthās*.

[21] Also in a number of other works Kellens has challenged several received interpretations in Zoroastrian Studies.

[22] Reactions from the Zoroastrian communities were remarkably calm.

[23] The compositional status of the arrangement of the textual corpus cannot be described as a "canon," see Stausberg (1998d); Panaino (2007:31).

(thereby implying a chronological relationship) has become a matter of intense dispute (e.g. Skjærvø 2003–2004; Panaino 2007). Moreover, the existence of an intermediary stratum, Middle Avestan, has recently been suggested (Tremblay 2006a). However, from the point of view of a wider contextualization it has been lamented that there is as yet no philological work done which specifically aims at making the textual findings comparable to archaeological data (Kuz'mina 2007:458).

Since Zarathustra[24] is, in one way or the other, intimately linked to the *Gāthās*, any interpretation of the date of this text implies a statement on the date of Zarathustra.[25] The latter question remains as much a mystery as it was in the 19th century, with the only difference that hardly anybody these days would situate him in Western Iran. The debate has been further fuelled by the work of Gherardo Gnoli, who has supported Henning's earlier (1949/51) but commonly dismissed theory of the date 618–541 BCE for the life of Zarathustra (Gnoli 2000). However, despite all the learning that went into his somewhat labyrinthine book, it seems that Gnoli has so far convinced hardly anybody — apart from his own faithful students. Gnoli's analysis builds on the convergence of several traditions from antiquity that, he argues, all implicitly or explicitly point to this date. Ironically, an American popular "independent scholar" has recently used some reports from Greek and Roman historians claiming a much earlier date for Zoroaster as "evidence" to support a presumed convergence between the teaching of Zarathustra and the findings of Late Neolithic archaeology, which would make Zarathustra into the leader of the new movement that gave rise to the successful diffusion of an agricultural way of life (Settegast 2005). This thesis, pointing to the other extreme in the historical scenario, seems so unlikely, unconventional and speculative that it has been hardly discussed or taken seriously in scholarly circles, but it may well be attractive to Iranian nationalist discourse.

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[24] The two main etymological explanations ("possessing old camels" vs. "camel-driver") have recently been supplemented by a new one: "who likes camels," see Périkhanian (2007).

[25] For some hypotheses on Zoroaster's homeland see Boyce (1992); Khlopin (1993); Sarianidi (1998). See Shaked (2005) for a discussion of the problem of origins in general.

2. The Younger Avestan Texts

Writing in the late 1990s I still felt entitled to bemoan the relative neglect of the Younger Avestan texts compared to the Old Avestan corpus (Stausberg 2002a:107). This picture has changed somewhat to the better in the past years. Although we are still lacking studies of many daily prayer texts assembled in the so-called Small Avesta *(Xorde Avesta)*, there now at least exist a summary of their content and a study of their place in ritual practices (Choksy and Kotwal 2005) as well as an analysis of the compositional structure of texts recited at each of the five divisions of the day (Hintze 2007b). Moreover, some new editions and translations, usually provided with introductions and occasionally also with notes, but rarely with substantial commentaries, have been published.[26] To some extent, these recent contributions facilitate the work of the historian of religions. The studies of some of the greater hymns (Yašts) have, as part of the interpretation of the texts, also touched upon questions of ancient Iranian and Zoroastrian mythology (e.g. Panaino 1995; Humbach and Ichaporia 1998; Pirart 2006; Kellens 2007). Unfortunately, there is still no comprehensive study of that topic.[27] (Maybe the shadow of Dumézil is still felt as too overpowering?)

The study of these texts to some extent bridges the distance between the *Gāthās* and the later Zoroastrian history. However, it should also been pointed out that we are still lacking a study, not to speak of an up to date edition and translation, of the *Vendidād (Vīdēvdāt)*, an often quoted key-text for much of what is perceived as typically Zoroastrian practices such as the disposal of the dead, the significance of the dog, and the rules regulating menstruation.[28]

Recent studies of the names of the god Ahura Mazdā and the deity Vaiiu (Panaino 2002) and of the logic and formation of epithets in the Avesta (Sadovsky 2007) will be of interest to historians of religions. The exemplary collaboration between a Western philologist and a learned

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[26] I.M. Steblin-Kamensky has published a new Russian translation of selected Avestan texts in 1993.

[27] Colpe et al. (1986) presents a (now somewhat dated) comprehensive repertory. For the mythic theme of the great winter see now Hultgård (2007).

[28] But there now is the Videvdad-project: http://www.videvdad.com/ (November 29, 2007).

Parsi high-priest has greatly helped to understand a hitherto hermetically sealed treatise of ritualistic matters, the *Hērbadestān* and *Nērangestān* (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1995, 2000, 2003). Also some other Avestan texts no longer used in liturgical contexts have been studied (e.g. Piras 2000).

3. Middle Persian Translations of the Avestan Texts (Zand)

The *Hērbadestān* and *Nērangestān* are examples of texts where the Avestan and Pahlavi (Middle Persian) versions form an organic unity. In their edition Kotwal and Kreyenbroek therefore present both versions alongside each other. Not all Avestan texts have Middle Persian translations and commentaries, but many do, including the *Gāthās*. While the Zand, i.e. the Middle Persian translations cum annotations, were previously often dismissed as worthless from a philological point of view, they have in recent years been rediscovered with regard to their importance for philology as well as the history of religions. It is increasingly realized that the Zand was ascribed revelatory status alongside the Avesta. We now have some exemplary studies of the translation techniques (Josephson 1997; Cantera 2004), while the study of Zoroastrian exegesis, compared to what has been done for Jewish traditions, is still in its early stages (Shaked 2003; Elman 2006). Gignoux has made a first attempt to set up an inventory of the different commentators in the Pahlavi scriptures (Gignoux 1995). The reluctance to look at texts from both the Avestan and the Pahlavi angle may also be grounded in the academic division of labour which separates the study of ancient Iranian texts (often in departments of Indo-European Studies) from the study of Middle Persian (mostly, if done at all, in departments of Iranian Studies). Up to now research has not yet crossed the threshold of the Middle Persian stage. Translations of Zoroastrian texts into New Persian or Gujarāti are still not being studied at all.

4. Pahlavi Texts and Sasanian Law

The study of the Pahlavi literature seems to proceed as slowly as ever, but at least some important texts have been studied in the past two decades, also by Iranian scholars. Moreover, we now have quite an up-to date survey of Pahlavi literature (Cereti 2001). However, the inher-

ent difficulties of that language (beginning with the script) require patience for progress in Pahlavi studies.

Several Middle Persian texts discuss legal matters, including a large collection of edited judgments from pre-Islamic times that probably served as a practical handbook for judges. Since it rarely gives the reasons for the judgments it reports, the underlying legal theory and rules of jurisprudence have to be reconstructed tentatively (Jany 2005). The text has been edited and translated both by a Russian and a German scholar (Perikhanian 1997; Macuch 1993). One interesting aspect is that the text witnesses a degree of professionalization and differentiation of law from religious frameworks. This is especially remarkable given the claim made by several texts that the Avesta and the Zand constituted the ultimate legal sources and in view of the fact that there was an overlap between judiciary and priestly functionaries. The importance of the legal dimension is underlined by the idea — as expressed in several texts — that religions operate as "laws." A core element of ancient Zoroastrianism is the family. Accordingly, there is an extensive family law, which has now been studied (Hjerrild 2003). The Zoroastrian concern with the fate of the soul in the other world has been translated into the legal reality of structures that can be loosely described as charitable trusts (Jany 2004). The impact of Sasanian law on later Islamic law in Iran has sometimes been pointed out, for instance with regard to trusts and temporary marriages (Macuch 2006). But a comparative analysis has concluded that "we cannot prove that Sasanian legal thinking has anything to do with *uṣūl al-fiqh*" (Jany 2005:327). One of the most exciting developments in the study of Zoroastrian-Sasanian law, as Albert de Jong has reminded me, is the recent exploration of parallels and relations with Talmudic law (see Macuch 2002 and Elman 2004 [with a review of previous research]). Unfortunately, the post-Pahlavi legal texts and traditions have so far not been studied at all.

5. *Astrology*

Astrology has been an implicit embarrassment to all views of Zoroastrianism that take the doctrine of free-will and ethical choice as the fundamentals of the religion. Nevertheless, the presence of astrology is an

empirical fact.[29] In recent years, Italian scholars have presented pioneering work on the Middle Persian texts dealing with astrology and its cosmographical, eschatological, mythological, political, and military implications (Panaino 1999; Raffelli 2001) as well as the wider inter- or transcultural contexts of astrology (Panaino 1998), with Iran being "on the road" between Babylonia and India. Gernot Windfuhr has repeatedly argued that astrological patterns are a key to a number of fundamental issues of ancient Zoroastrianism (e.g. Windfuhr 2003). Later and contemporary astrological practices will, one hopes, eventually also be deemed worthy of being studied.

6. *Greek and Roman Sources*

Greek and Latin sources link Zoroaster to astrology. Just note the Greek rendering of the name Zarathustra as alluding to a star (*astron*). In 1997, Albert de Jong published a groundbreaking re-evaluation of the Greek and Roman reports about Zoroastrianism, to some extent providing a counterbalance to the picture of the religion painted by the Iranian sources written for the most parts by priests. Unfortunately, there is still no comparable systematic study of the Oriental Christian and Jewish sources on Zoroastrianism. Some studies have been published on the "influence" of Iran on Greek culture and religion, including work written by classical philologists and historians of Eastern Mediterranean religions (e.g. Bremmer 1999, 2002; Burkert 2004).

7. *Politics and Religion in Achaemenian Iran*

As the first major transnational empire of the ancient world, Achaemenian Iran is the subject of perennial interest for scholars; however, there are ebbs and flows in this field of study as well. Currently, we are in the midst of a flow. Major exhibitions took place some years ago in London and Speyer (illustrated catalogues!); in 2006, Pierre Briant, the author of the most complete study of the empire published so far, set up an internet museum.[30] At the same time, we have in recent years witnessed

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[29] An analogous observation can be made for magic, for which we are still lacking a comprehensive study (in any historical period).

[30] http://www.museum-achemenet.college-de-france.fr (accessed January 4th, 2008).

the attempts by several scholars writing in German, French and English to highlight the importance of the religious ideas and rhetoric underlying the imperial projects of the kings (Ahn 1992; Kellens 2002; Pirart 2002; Skjærvø 2005; Lincoln 2007; for a different evaluation see de Jong 2005). Still, Zoroastrianism was hardly the official or state religion of the empire. It seems that one impact of the work of the bureaucracy of the empire was the change of the Zoroastrian calendar (by adding a further five days to the 12 × 30 = 360 days of the earlier version), with important ramifications for the shape and "logic" of Zoroastrian festivals (Boyce 2005 [with a review of the literature on the intricate problems surrounding the calendar]).[31]

8. *Zoroastrianism under Hellenistic and Arsacid Rule*

Compared to the Achaemenian and the later Sasanian empires, the epitomes of Persian political grandeur, the "intermediary" periods have attracted less scholarly attention. It is basically the merit of Geo Widengren, Carsten Colpe and most of all Mary Boyce's massive history-project to have unearthed the importance of these periods for the history of Zoroastrianism (Boyce and Grenet 1991; volume 4 on the Arsacids/Parthians is currently being prepared by Albert de Jong for publication). Apart from being unduly neglected in comparison to the other two main dynasties, the Parthian period is of interest for the comparative historian of religions because it may have been at that time that Zoroastrianism made an impact on early Christianity — a problem of recurrent interest on which some scholars have thrown new light in the recent decade on individual motifs (see Hultgård 1998a, 2000b, 2000c), especially concerning apocalypticism (Widengren, Hultgård and Philonenko 1995; Philonenko 2000; Frenschkowski 2004 [illuminating also from a methodological point of view]; for surveys of Iranian apocalypticism see Hultgård (1998b); Kreyenbroek (2002)). With Judaism Zoroastrians shared an even longer history, with points of contacts stretching from the Achaemenian Empire to modern Iran, India, and the diasporas. Interestingly, the case for putative Iranian influence has traditionally been made for Jewish texts or communities with relatively little direct

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[31] This lengthy article on the development of the calendar from pre-Zoroastrian times to modernity presents Boyce's powerful vision of Zoroastrian history in a nutshell.

exposure to Iranians, while the Irano-Judaic contacts and interactions that took place with regard to Babylonian Jewry, i.e. Jewish groups that were living alongside Iranians in the Iranian Empires, have only recently been explored more systematically (Herman 2005). Among the various scholarly contributions to the relationships between both religious traditions one should especially note the series *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages* published by the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East in Jerusalem; five volumes have been published so far (1982–2003), with at least two more in the pipeline.[32]

9. Sasanian Religion

Several sources testify to the special importance Zoroastrianism had for the Sasanian kings and in the framework of the Sasanian state. The beginning of the empire witnessed attempts at reorganizing religion, apparently in order to create an ideology of "unity" for the new empire (de Jong 2006). Gnoli has argued that the idea of "Iran" obtained a new religious significance in Sasanian propaganda (Gnoli 1989, 1993). Religious titles, myths and epical traditions apparently played a large — but disputed as for the details — role for the self-understanding of Sasanian kingship. This state of affairs has in earlier scholarship been theorized as a Sasanian "state-church." The different titles, schools, and functions of "priests" in the Sasanian empire are now somewhat better understood (e.g. Gignoux 1986; Shaked 1990a). More recent scholarship, however, has painted a more complex picture, and the "state-church" theorem has been questioned, at least as a static institution, though the idea still has its supporters. One now rather points to historical change from early to late Sasanian periods as well as to the plurality of religious practices, ideas, and movements in Sasanian Iran (Shaked 1994a), not only with regard to movements such as Mazdakism (e.g. Crone 1994) and Zurvanism, a variant interpretation of protology mainly reported by Armenian, Syriac and Greek Christian and later Islamic secondary sources. The older literature classifies Zurvanism as a "heresy" (but some claim

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[32]) Colpe (2003) assembles studies pertaining to the relationship of Iranian religions with their Western neighbours by this highly original author. See now also Sundermann (2008:155–160) for the Iranian background of the demon Asmodaios.

that it actually was the "orthodox" faith of many Sasanian kings).[33] The emphasis on religious plurality is reinforced by works of art of various genres as well as coins, seals, bullae and other materials. Magic and other forms of "popular religion" (Shaked 1997) have been studied, and the picture of the relationship between the different religions in the Sasanian empire has become more complex.[34] The various religions situated within the orbit of the Sasanian Empire (including but not limited to Judaism, Christianity, and Manichaeism) were on the one hand well-demarcated and partly also rival communities, but at the same time there is evidence that they shared common concerns and forms of religion generally classified as magic and popular religiosity. The encounter or confrontation with rival religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Manichaeism took several forms including mutual resentment (Williams 1996), polemics (Shaked 1990b; Ahdut 1999) and redefinitions of religious self-understanding (De Jong 2003). The statement that "while publications on Sasanian primary sources… have noticeably increased in recent years, historical syntheses and historiographical treatises remain scarce" (Shayegan 2003:363) is even more true for the religious than the political and social history of the last pre-Islamic empire.

10. Iran Major

Recent research has emphasised the local and regional variability of Zoroastrianism. Some Greek and Roman sources point in this direction (de Jong 1997). There is a dissertation on Zoroastrianism in Armenia (Russell 1987) and a series of follow-up articles by the same author (Russell 2004). Armenian Zoroastrianism apparently was markedly different from the South Western Iran version of the religion (as attested in later sources). While Zoroastrianism in the Caucasus needs to be explored further — especially the case of Georgia requires greater attention — there now are some exciting studies of Zoroastrianism in Eastern Iran in the wider sense (often referred to as Central Asia), mostly in Bactria and Sogdia (in today's Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Philologists have continued to study Bactrian and Sogdian documents. While we

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[33] De Blois (2000:6) suggests a Greek origin of the Zurvanite myth.

[34] A series of publications on Christianity in the Sasanian empire have been published in recent years.

have Christian, Buddhist, and most of all Manichaean writings in Sogdian (for a survey see Tremblay 2001), Zoroastrianism is attested in that language only by fragments. New textual materials from Bactria have been unearthed and are being studied, but it seems that few of these documents have explicit religious content; sometimes, however, they do have implications for religious history, for example with regard to the calendar (Shaked 2004). The arts of Central Asia in general and Sogdia in particular have been recovered by archaeologists and art historians, especially from the former Soviet Union. Works addressing the religious dimensions of the arts and archaeology of Central Asia, many of them by the Russian archaeologist Boris Marshak (e.g. 2002) and the French archaeologist Frantz Grenet, point to some remarkable differences compared to Western Iranian and Avestan Zoroastrianism with regard to institutions, religious practices and representations as well as to the organization of the pantheon (see also Tremblay 2006b). Some Chinese and Japanese scholars have in recent years begun to explore the East Asian history of Zoroastrianism from antiquity to the present (Ito 1980; Guangda 1994, 2000; Baiqin 2004; Aoki 2006a). Since this scholarship is mostly in Chinese and Japanese, it is hardly being noticed by American and European scholars.

11. Islamicization

The religious plurality of Sasanian Zoroastrianism is still mirrored by the early Islamic reports (e.g. Shaked 1994b). Even the Pahlavi texts, the majority of which were written or, in the case of older cumulative traditions, assumed their final shape in the Islamic period, are less homogenous doctrinally than is commonly assumed. The Arab conquest and the subsequent Islamicization of Iran fundamentally changed the societal status, religious shape and social context of Zoroastrianism. With the marginalization of the communities, their theological and mythological horizon naturally became more restricted. In the East, Islamicization led to the total disappearance of Zoroastrian communities. While these changes appear radical and dramatic in retrospect, Islamicization was quite a complex process that did not take place overnight. Jamsheed Choksy has produced a pioneer study for the first centuries (1997). More research is needed.

12. *The Zoroastrian Legacy in Islamic Iran*

While Zoroastrian communities disappeared, elements from pre-Islamic civilization and Zoroastrianism were absorbed into Islamic Iranian culture in general and in royal contexts in particular. The Islamic conquest of Iran was counterbalanced by the Iranian conquest of Islam. Some elements of such processes of transfer and appropriation have been studied with regard to law (see above) as well as (among other aspects) proverbs, stories, literary motifs, tropes of royalty, ideas about the worship of the soul (for all these examples see Shaked 1995) and festivals (Cristoforetti 2002). Ehsan Yarshater, the editor of the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, has published an extensive survey of the state of knowledge with regard to Iranian themes in, among others, the Koran and the hadith, and has challenged some widely accepted views about the Iranian presence in the Islamic world (Yarshater 1998). Students of folklore and regional ethnography have repeatedly pointed to pre-Islamic legacies in narratives, practices, and languages, but this question has not been studied systematically. All these issues, which are situated at the crossroads between different branches of scholarship, are far from exhausted.

13. *Zoroastrianism in Modern and Contemporary Iran*

On the mental map of many people Zoroastrianism is an "ancient" religion. Speaking to various audiences, I have often encountered surprise at the very existence of Zoroastrians in contemporary Iran. Again the academic division of labour seems to have impeded scholarly work. Iranologists not specifically working on pre-Islamic culture are as a rule not interested in Zoroastrian matters. Zoroastrians are hardly ever mentioned in books on modern and contemporary Iranian history and culture. The little scholarly interest there has been (apart from Mary Boyce, see above) has come from social anthropologists (Fischer and Abedi 1990; Kestenberg Amighi 1990).[35] My own work (Stausberg

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[35] In Iran, Katayoun Mazdapour has published substantial work on the Zoroastrian dialect spoken in Yazd (known as Dari). Anahita Farudi and Maziar Toosarvandani from the University of Virginia have started the Dari Language Project (http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~dari/index.html; accessed April 2nd, 2008).

2002b:152–262) and that of Choksy (2006a) represent initial surveys, but much more primary research is needed.[36]

14. *Parsi Studies*

Compared to the dearth of studies on the Iranian communities, the Parsis are much better studied. There is published work on Parsi history, both on pre-colonial times (Kamerkar and Dhunjisha 2002) including the publication of some primary sources (Cereti 1991, 2007) and, even more so, on the colonial period with an emphasis on Bombay (Palsetia 2001). There are several studies of Parsi politicians, business-people, industrialists, journalists, charity, and theatre. Parsis themselves keep on publishing eulogies of their heroes. Turning to religion, a recent volume assembles studies of religious texts and performances as well as social, economical, political, and religious history (Hinnells and Williams 2007). A substantial account, in the making for three decades now, by Hinnells and Jamasp Asa, a Parsi high priest, is awaited any time now. The Japanese scholar Harukazu Nakabeppu has done extended long-term fieldwork in an old priestly centre in rural India, but since his publications are in Japanese they have made no impact on Western scholarship. Other notable work includes an experiment with applying a post-colonial perspective on the recent trajectories of the community (Luhrmann 1996) and, more relevant for the study of religion, a volume based on interviews with middle aged or elderly (predominantly) lay persons in Mumbai, providing valuable first-hand insight in the range of religious mentalities and practices among urban Parsis (Kreyenbroek 2001). Despite all these studies (plus the semi-scholarly work done by Parsis themselves), there are still quite a few lacunae regarding a number of aspects, most visibly with regard to Parsi history outside Mumbai city.

15. *Diaspora*

Already from the late 18th century, the Zoroastrian communities in India and Iran were affected by national and international migration. Migration has accelerated in past decades, probably resulting in the

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[36] Sarah Stewart (SOAS) has recently initiated an ambitious project.

most radical geographical and demographical change of Zoroastrianism throughout its long history. Zoroastrians have migrated to Sri Lanka, Burma, East Asia, East and South Africa, Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and other places. It is the lasting merit of John Hinnells to have observed, documented, and analysed these processes since the 1970s, resulting in two major publications, one on Zoroastrianism in Britain (Hinnells 1996), and one on the world-wide diaspora (Hinnells 2005; for Sri Lanka see now Choksy in Hinnells and Williams [2007]; for Japan see Aoki [2006b]). In his work Hinnells mostly focuses on the Parsis and pays considerably less attention to the Iranians. (Iranian Zoroastrians are likewise virtually absent from the vast literature published on Iranian diasporas.) More ethnographic work is needed, for example with regard to religious practices. Hinnells' impressive database was created in the 1980s. It will therefore be of crucial importance to keep the record up to date (for a 2003 survey on Zoroastrians in the UK and parts of Europe see Mehta in Hinnells and Williams [2007]).

16. Gender

Attention to the effects and implications of gender in religion has in the past two decades become part of the ABC of religious studies. Not surprisingly, then, gender roles, stereotypes, and constructions have been studied with regard to ancient, medieval, and modern Zoroastrianism (e.g. de Jong 1995, 2003b), also with respect to implicit gender politics in embryological speculations (Lincoln 1988). Some studies address the position of women in ancient Iranian history (Brosius 1996; Rose 1998) and in Sasanian law (Elman 2003, 2006). Further work has been done on different types of female religious performances (Phallipou 2003; Stewart and Kalinock in Stausberg 2004b). There now exists a first book-length summary (Choksy 2002) of some general issues which, however, is unlikely to remain the final word spoken on this matter.

17. Purity and Rituals

Rules of purity have been addressed in social anthropology, notably by Mary Douglas. This has stimulated greater attention to the paramount importance rules of purity and practices of purification have in

Zoroastrianism (Choksy 1989; Williams 1994; de Jong 1999). The related areas of rituals and performances have likewise emerged as major topics in the study of religions, especially in connection with anthropological approaches. Again, this has had resonance in the study of Zoroastrianism. There has long been a "ritualist" trend in the interpretation of early Zoroastrianism (see above § 1). The age-old debate on the botanical identity of the Haoma used, or rather produced, in the priestly liturgies, has recently been continued and enriched by new hypotheses, coming also from Indologists (see Flattery and Schwartz 1989; Oberlies 1998; Falk 2002–2003; several articles in the *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 9/2003). When it comes to the actual ritual practices, not only do we now have authoritative descriptions and studies of several priestly rituals, most of all the Yasna (Darrow 1988; Kotwal and Boyd 1991; Williams and Boyd 1993 [in relation to aesthetical theory]; Windfuhr 2003; Fischer 2004; Skjærvø 2007), and animal sacrifice (de Jong 2002), but also analyses of funerals (including important archaeological work on the development of funerary structures), initiations, shrines and pilgrimages, prayer texts, royal rituals, lay and females performances, to name only some (see Stausberg [2004b]; for an inventory of ritual practices among contemporary Zoroastrians in India and Iran see Stausberg [2004a]). All these fields, however, are far from exhausted. Among many other things, we are still lacking a substantial study of Zoroastrian fire-temples (for some preliminary surveys see now Choksy [2006b, 2007]; the archaeological documentation needs to be further systematized).

18. Western Perceptions of Zoroastrianism

There is a long history of outside perceptions of Zoroastrianism. Recall the Greek and Roman reports. However, there are also other Oriental sources available, mainly by Christian and Islamic authors (e.g. Shaked 1994b; Stausberg 1997). Already from antiquity there is a tradition of pseudepigraphical materials attributed to Zoroaster and some of his associates (Beck 1991; Stausberg 2007b). In Western Europe, we find since the Renaissance wide-ranging discursive representations of Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism (also iconographic visualizations, for which see Stausberg 1998c), far beyond the limits of scholarship. By now there are two studies of the appropriation of Zoroaster in Western European intellectual and religious history, one focusing on the early modern period

(Stausberg 1998a), another giving snapshots taken from a larger chronological framework, all the way from the Greek reports to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* written in the 1880s (Rose 2000; on Nietzesche see now Mayer 2006). With Nietzsche, Zarathustra became part of popular culture. The post-Nietzschean Western history of Zoroaster still remains to be written, which should ideally be done by incorporating a history of scholarship.

Prospects

As will have become clear, some areas of scholarship are more off the beaten track than others. The intensity of the debate, the speed of innovation, and the available research output are generally higher in areas with more participants, but sometimes individual scholars have been able to open the doors to new arenas. In some cases, there are vast terrains to be discovered behind these doors, whereas other arenas can turn out to be just large enough for one book or two.

In some cases, the innovations consist of reinterpretations of already available data based on established methodologies. In other cases, new source materials are being explored. A third type of innovation results from the application of new methodological and theoretical insights or approaches deriving from other research fields to the study of Zoroastrianism.

In all these areas productive research will hopefully continue, especially in such areas where study has only just begun. Hopefully, research will also take quite unexpected turns and address at least some of the various lacunae pointed to above. The various developments taken together imply the need to move conceptually beyond essentialist notions of the religion in order to obtain a more complex picture of Zoroastrianism. It is likely that the predominance of rather normative views of Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian history in the past — for instance with regard to the importance of certain kinds of source materials, periods, and protagonists — has obscured other significant research options.

In light of the fragmentary situation of the field, the future prospects for the study of Zoroastrianism in general are difficult to assess. Since several subject areas are dominated by single individuals, their disappearance (be it only for changing research agendas) may paralyse the

further development of such fields. On the other hand, the recently created academic positions devoted to the field (in London and Toronto) raise the hope for its more sustainable development.

Our survey of recent research achievements has illustrated the tendency that certain hot topics in the general study of religions have also made an impact on Zoroastrian studies. Although the results of such attempts may not always have been as substantial as one might wish, the trend of moving from general insights to the study of the particular is likely to continue. Some areas where I actually do hope for this development to take place include the study of visual and material cultures, which would help to move beyond a textual model for the study of religion. The study of material cultures would focus, among other things, on food and eating, consumption, clothes and clothing, home furnishing and domestic interiors, architecture, place, and landscape. Furthermore, the economic and legal frameworks of the communities have not been much studied, in particular with regard to the Iranian communities.

Apart from such developments, which some may regard as rather fancy and which all privilege the modern periods, in the study of Zoroastrianism much homework still needs to be done, and one could easily play the ball back to the philologists. For despite some exciting developments in Old and Middle Iranian studies, as a historian of religions one would wish the philologists not to forget the elementary tools of the trade. While we now finally have some grammatical surveys of Avestan — one in German and one in Spanish — we still have to largely rely on a dictionary from 1904. An up-to date dictionary of Middle Persian is likewise lacking — as well as a grammar — and many key texts still need to be properly edited. Above all, the Zoroastrian literatures in New Persian and Gujarātī are situated in academic no man's land and have to a large extent remained terra incognita for Zoroastrian studies[37] (an exception confirming the rule is Vitalone [1996]).[38] Accordingly, a fair amount of mapping and surveying still needs to be done.

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[37] This criticism applies to my own work as much to that of other scholars.

[38] Some further books are in the pipeline, including a work on Persian Zoroastrian prayer poetry by Beate Schmermbeck and a study-cum-edition of the main poetic Persian text on the migration and early history of the Parsis in India by Alan Williams (see also Williams in Hinnells and Williams [2007]).

Only once that work is done will the scholarly community be able to bridge the late Medieval or early modern periods and the modern and contemporary histories and thus produce a comprehensive picture of Zoroastrian history.

To conclude, the field is extremely fragile, but the goods news is that an abundance of research options remain open. The question of the origins of Zoroastrianism still seems as open as ever, and a comprehensive study is needed. Although philologists keep on referring to the Vedas in order to throw light on the Avestan texts, only some topics have been investigated in a comparative manner (Hintze 2000) and no systematic study has been attempted. There are also basic questions of a historiographical nature that need to be addressed. As for the field of modern and contemporary Zoroastrianism, which to my eyes is one of the most under-researched areas, my own research agenda points towards a study of two contradictory and even antagonistic developments: modern Zoroastrian esotericism as it developed in early 20th century India (see Stausberg 2002b:118–127) and non-ethnic Neo-Zarathushtrianism which has taken global dimensions since the Iranian Revolution (for a sketch see Stausberg in Hinnells and Williams [2007]).

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Review Essay

Religion and the Secular

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Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations. Edited by Timothy Fitzgerald. London: Equinox Publishing, 2007. 288 pp. ISBN-10 184553266X, ISBN-13 9781845532666, $125.00 (hbk.); ISBN-10 1845532678, ISBN-13 9781845532673, $40.00 (pbk.).

Since the early 1990s, the so-called "global resurgence of religion" has inspired scholars to re-examine the relation between the religious and the secular in the modern world. Even though this has produced a wide range of studies (Asad 2003; Berger 1999; Bruce 1992 & 2002; Casanova 1994; Martin 2005; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Starck 1999; and many more), most will agree that some major problems in our understanding of the relation between the secular and the religious refuse to go away. One such problem lies in the field's failure to come to terms with the western-Christian roots of the category of religion and its counterpart "the secular." Most studies have limited their analyses to Europe and North America, and few have seriously studied other cultures. This has constrained both (1) the current understanding of what is called "the religious," "the secular" and the so-called religious-secular divide and (2) our understanding of the social realities of non-western cultures.[1]

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[1] Some of the early voices who raised these issues were Balagangadhara 1994 and King 1999. For an interesting elaboration on the problems caused by introducing categories of religion and the secular in India, see De Roover 2002.

role of the religion-secular dichotomy in the historical development of the self-understanding of a range of cultures. Besides the more general first section, in which the above approach and related issues are dealt with, the volume contains sections on Japan, India and South Asia, and Africa. The four sections each contain about three contributions, making up a total of fourteen chapters.

The first and more theoretical section opens with a contribution of Richard King. He focuses on the complicity of the modern study of religion in the reproduction of a liberal, secular ideology that goes back to the Christian past of the West. The "mystification of 'mysticism'" makes up one example of the ideological function of the religious-secular divide: the experiential and private realm of "mysticism" became the locus for an encounter with a transcendent reality, the core of "religion," set apart from the public domains of politics and economics. The work of Russell McCutcheon equally focuses on the complicity of the study of religion, more particularly in the USA, in the reproduction of a liberal, secular ideology. He argues that scholars of religion, in claiming that "religion" is a *sui generis* category, unrelated to the sphere of politics, assume a specific political stance. Moreover, he brings out the political role they play in the public domain.

In the next chapter, Markus Dressler assesses the religious-secular dichotomy in the context of the formation of the modern Turkish nation-state and the related emergence of Alevism as a religious minority. The following contribution of Fitzgerald focuses on the case of the so-called "Shinto" and its development from the nineteenth century onwards. He starts from the observation that the Meiji Constitution guaranteed religious freedom. He shows how the Japanese had no concept of "religion" as a distinct domain and how, consequently, they had difficulty in grasping what this freedom of religion was all about. By analyzing the way in which the Japanese dealt with this problem, he brings out the colonial and ideological role that the concept of "religion" played in the Japanese society.

In the second section of the book, devoted to Japan, three authors focus on the process of the formation of the religious-secular binary in the Japanese culture. Jun'ichi Isomae analyzes the introduction

wide range of relatively short contributions (12 contributions on 288 pages). Taken together, these illustrate one point very clearly: if we look at cultures other than the Christian West and if we analyse the colonial project historically, we see that the binary categories "religion" and "the secular" are not clearly present in all human societies or mindsets. Many of the case-studies expose how the imposition of these categories on non-western cultures has led to *a demand to restructure their cultural experience*. As Fitzgerald puts it: "The evidence is that few non-European languages contain semantic equivalents, and that the demand of colonial powers for the constitutional separation of church and state, or of religion and politics, and of the 'right to freedom of religion', has turned out to be a demand for the virtual reconstruction of the self-representations of indigenous societies in line with Western ones" (9). This idea is crucial to appreciate the common focus, as all contributions deal with colonial encounters between the West and specific non-western cultures. They explore two central issues: (a) how the categories of religion and the secular were shaped by these colonial encounters, and (b) how this impacted upon the self-understanding of non-western cultures.

In his contribution on nineteenth-century descriptions of South Africa, David Chidester (153–175) captivatingly makes the case that the emergence of the secular discipline of comparative religion in Europe was constituted by the dreams of the colonial project. He analyses the difficulties the coloniser faced in coming to terms with the Zulu people. As "savages," the latter did not have religion according to the Europeans, but the colonisers did ascribe religion (superstition, of course) to the same groups as "colonised subjects." This happened through a concerted effort of missionaries, scholars and novelists who "were entangled in modes of intellectual production that mystified the relations of power — imperial and colonial, modern and capitalist — in which they worked out their theories of religion" (171). Another interesting contribution by James Cox (71–92) shows the unsettling effects of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Cox demonstrates how its secular land politics compelled the Alaskan native people to abandon its traditional "religious" practices and thus disrupted the transmission of ancestral attitudes connecting this people with its ecological environment.

The problems of translating religion and the separation of religion and politics to a non-western culture are also expertly elucidated in Jun'ichi Isomae's contribution on the peculiar development of State Shinto in Japan (93–101). The establishment of the categories of religion and the secular in the Japanese state, he argues, went hand in hand with the State Shinto shrine policies and, through shrine worship, the institutional indoctrination of state subjects into an emperor-based nationalism (94). The author traces the shifting understanding (from the end of the 19th century till today) of this state cult as now a religious counterweight to Christianity, then a secular morality. "Ultimately," the author concludes, "State Shinto was an ambiguous system, clearly classifiable as neither 'religion' nor 'secular', born out of trial and error and adopted as a means of the native elite in Japan to unify the people in a response to the wave of Westernization. The most distinctive feature was that it sought to establish a native Shinto system that perceived shrines as non-religious or secular while also fully exploiting the Western idea of religious freedom (99)." Thomas Pearson's contribution (103–116) on the impact of French imperialism in Vietnam and the formation of the *yang* religion of the "Montagnards" also needs mentioning. He stresses the identity-forming rhetoric at play and its survival until today. Will Sweetman (117–134) addresses an ongoing debate in the contemporary study of India: the idea of the colonial construction of caste (as formulated by Nicolas Dirks 2001). On the basis of valuable material from missionary sources, he clarifies that the understanding of caste as a religious system intrinsically connected to Hinduism came into being only as late as the 1820s, implying that, before, the British colonial rule was not in need of such a construction of the caste system.

Taken together, this volume and the project of which it is a part should certainly be praised, because they tackle the problem of involving non-western cultures in solving the fundamental puzzles of the western study of religion. To support this effort, I would like to end by formulating two questions, which may contribute to its further growth.

1. How does the secular do what it does? In his contribution (211–240), Fitzgerald argues that in the course of western history "encompassing religion" (Christian Truth) has been replaced by "privatized religion," thus transforming "religion" into a separate domain, free from politics,

free from human interference, free from the non-spiritual. "This concept of religion can be seen as the product of "secular" thinking and also as a condition for the realization of secularity in the first place" (212). At another point, while arguing that the essentialisation of religion and politics as distinct domains has been embedded in eighteenth-century North American constitutions, Fitzgerald says: "By turning religion into an object, or several objects, of constitutional legislation, the high ground of 'secular' rationality is set out and enacted, and this in turn is strongly linked with the production of secular discourse in various forms, such as history… But what was it that produced secular discourse?"(213)

In other words, this creation of "privatized religion" is closely linked to "the secular," but, as the author himself asks: "How"? He turns to Trevor Stack's essay (47–69), which argues that the Catholic Church, by making use of the higher ground of secular knowledge (developed partly within the Church), can give and gave itself, its ministers and its text a new kind of authority. In that way, Fitzgerald summarizes, the "data" found in other cultures are subordinated to dominant Christian categories (213). This, he remarks, implies that we end up in an "Alice-in-Wonderland circularity where our own secular positionality has been made possible by those religious objects themselves" (214).

While the religion-secular dichotomy is linked to its western-Christian (Protestant) roots and to its role in modern and colonial settings, the content of "religion" and "secular," the nature of their relation and the outlines of the dynamic of secularisation remain fundamentally unexplored from this alternative perspective. Two elements are essential to the transition of "encompassing religions" into "privatized religion": this shift is *somehow* related to Protestant Christianity and *somehow* related to secular thought. This *somehow* needs to be explained more rigorously, because the nexus of connections between the categories and domains is unclear: secular thinking generates privatised religion; privatised religion generates secularity; the political is separated from this privatized religion; but the political is also the non-religious, hence, the secular; the secular is created by mercy of the religious (Protestantism); etc. In order to become clear, these claims and the logical and semantic relations among them need to be embedded in a theory. Such a larger framework or theory is lacking in the volume, which potentially allows a facile rejection of many of its significant theses.

2. What is wrong with the intercultural exchange of categories? Throughout the volume, one gets the impression that there is something "fundamentally wrong" with categories shifting in meaning over time or with the introduction of categories from one culture into another culture. But what is important about these shifts in meaning? What exactly is the problem in introducing the category of religion into India or among Native Americans? The category "yuppie" did not exist in the Middle Ages, while "orange" came through Arabic from Sanskrit, and "girl" used to refer to a young person of either sex. When we analyse the genetics of early modern populations, we are also introducing categories that they did not possess. Or take the word "silly," which in Old English used to mean blessed. *So what*? An historical analysis of discourse and categories is significant not to identify shifts in meaning *per se*. Shifts in meaning become significant only against the background of a theory on the historical development of the western culture and its understanding of other cultures. Such a theory is needed to clarify as to why a shift in the meaning of "religion" or "the secular" is of crucial importance.

Let us illustrate this point. Many scholars have linked the etymology of "religion" to *religare* ("to connect"). Others make the case for a link with *religere* ("to re-read," "to carefully select"). This last group claims that the Latin word *religio* had a completely different meaning to the "pagan" Romans — namely, *religio* referred to ancestral traditional practices — as compared to what "religion" would signify after the Christians transformed it into true belief.[2] This is interesting, not so much because it shows nuances in the meaning of the word "religion," but because it reveals that the Roman *religio* was a phenomenon completely different from the Christian religion and the modern understanding of religion. This difference has many consequences: in the Roman understanding, for example, it is senseless to ask whether a *religio* is true or false; in the Christian understanding this question is of primordial importance. Even though Fitzgerald clearly appreciates this problem (12–15), there is a need to delve deeper into the theoretical significance of shifts in meaning and of the introduction of alien categories into new cultural matrices.

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[2] See Balagangadhara 1994, pp. 31–64.

Perhaps the most important achievement of *Religion and the Secular* is that it identifies a lacuna in the contemporary research in the social sciences and religious studies. We are in urgent need of a conceptual history of the study of religion and the secular, sensitive to the event and phenomenon of colonialism. As such, this volume helps pave the road towards a genuine decolonisation of the study of religions.

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Book Reviews

Mircea Eliade: A Critical Reader. By Bryan S. Rennie, Critical Categories in the Study of Religion, London-Oakville: Equinox 2006 [August]. viii + 448 pp. ISBN 1-904768-93-8 (hbk.). £75.00 / $145.00; ISBN 1-904768-94-6 (pbk.). £18.99/$32.95.

This book is a valuable reader about one of the greatest readers of our field's past. Such a critical reader was surely imagined well before the 1960s, when his oeuvre set itself out as one of the most stimulating for the study of religions worldwide, and Eliade himself planned a reader, entitled *From Primitives to Zen*. Eliade also republished himself many times and in several different ways. Since 1978, the massive, in-quarto Parisian *Cahier de l'Herne* (published by Romanian émigrés, surely with Eliade's approval and most probably under his guidance) served as a kind of sometimes uncritical reader for the French speaking world. A more genuine reader is exemplified by another volume edited by Rennie, *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001). This included translations from Romanian of some literary and journal fragments, along with some Anglophone scholars present in this new book as well.

This reader is a timely publication. Only a few from among the founding fathers of the history of religions triggered such a vivid, divergent, polyvalent, and uneven reaction after their death. If it still holds true that "it is the scale that makes the phenomenon", the first comment cannot be but external, and regards the chronological and geographical selection. Albeit published in 2006, the age of this reader is of course a different one. The volume includes 43 texts along many sections and subsections grouped in 4 parts. Rennie prepared a short "General Introduction" (2–4), doubled by specific and short chapter introductions to every reprint. The 18 chapters written by Eliade (besides the three Romanian ones, opening and closing the whole, and published in 1937) range from 1949 to 1987. The average year of first publication (generally in French) is therefore 1964, or 1969 if we consider the subsequent first English translations. The 21 chapters on Eliade, including the first two of the editor, date from the last forty years of research, the oldest — and sharpest — critical comment being from 1966. Despite these rather nor-

mal criteria, much more unusual is the fact that — except Rennie's excerpted contributions (two from his 1996 book, and two others of 2000 and 2005) — all the rest range from 1966 to 1994 only. The average year for the other 17 articles is only 1981, being centered on the precedent generation of scholars, and even including Rennie's, the year would be only 1984. If the average 1964/1969 is quite misleading, 1981/1984 would be more apt for organizing a Pettazzoni Reader, or of any other relevant scholar who attained his akmé before the foundation of IAHR. As for Eliade, the second date should have superseded his biography, covering the metamorphosis of scholarship during the past decade and the period of changes which took place in his native country as well. With respect to Eliade's reprints, one could argue that the average period 1964-1969 is appropriately chosen, as his writings began to be known worldwide, especially in the American milieu, around this very period. The problem is thus not that Eliade's quite cosmopolitan roots, biography, and scholarly goals are eventually sacrificed for the sake of an Anglo-centric view, but that such a perspective is not up to date nor in accord with the last two decennia of research and exegesis.

Circulation, evolution, and repetitions are too evident and complex for all careful readers. Eliade's pre-1945 production is far more relevant and diverse. I find no explanation for leaving aside Eliade's "Preface" to the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (March 1986), which was later republished in the second and much transformed edition from 2005 (2005: xix–xxii). This is the most remarkable text ever written by a Romanian-born scholar in the Anglophone world, along with the equally precious "Contributor's Manual" that Eliade distributed some years before his death. Could we really ever imagine, say, Wissowa or Hastings, or any other encyclopedia editor — at least since Diderot — without their homologous, accolade-type works? While Eliade's Preface is abandoned, Rennie decided to republish three other articles from the *Encyclopedia*: "Hierophany", by Eliade and Lawrence E. Sullivan, "*Homo religiosus*", by Gregory D. Alles, both reprinted without further considerations in 2005, only with revised bibliography (*et pour cause*), and his own article, less conversant with the history of religions than Giovanni Casadio's fruitful global remarks.[1]

The translation of the 1937 essay on "Folklore as an Instrument of Knowledge" (25–37) is offered by Mac Linscott Ricketts, the best connoisseur of Eliade's writings outside Romania (a French version was published in *Cahier*

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[1] See Bryan Rennie, "Eliade, Mircea [Further considerations]," in *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*, Gale-Thomson, 2005, vol. 4: 2757b–2763b (here reprinted with additions but without the bibliography) and Giovanni Casadio, "Historiography [Further considerations]," *ibid.*, vol. 6: 4046b–4047b.

de l'Herne). Aiming to integrate phenomena such as levitation or incombustibility left aside on the historicist paradigm, "Folklore…" is here incompletely translated and edited. Eliade does not only say that "[h]ere we find a grave contradiction of that which is called the 'historicistic spirit of the nineteenth century,' …" (32); he also continued: "contrazicere pe care am discutat-o şi cu un alt prilej" ("a contradiction I also discussed on another occasion", see 1943, 39). At a closer inspection, this is not only true, but indeed helpful even without the author's direct references. Some paragraphs were discussed in the very same terms in other articles (1936). Moreover, his thought on divers "instruments of knowledge" (with dozen of examples) has a continuity from 1934 (*Oceanografie*) to 1970 (a play on Brâncuşi). Rennie introduced a single illustrated page (34) in the whole volume, and the photos illustrate a levitation. This supplementary page is indeed most adequate. But there were five photos, not two, and fixed all the states of Subbayah Pullavar during the experiment. Moreover, all the five photos were reproduced and discussed by Jean Filliozat (1906-1982) in 1953,[2] who analyzed levitation in minute details and with caution, but detected additional problems. When not contextualized — especially against the background of other Indological researches — Eliade's article was received as a proof of epistemological courage and insight. Here Rennie is not persuasive when speaking of "more esoteric works from Eliade's early years" (4), "his somewhat surprisingly credulous stance" (14), or "perhaps surprisingly credulous position" (25). The problems are thus a little bit more complicated than the current exegesis acknowledges.

Rennie claims that "[o]ne of the most instructive and valuable lessons of this anthology might well lie in closely observing where commentators have, with great care, attention, and confidence, seriously misinterpreted their subject" (3). Letting aside an almost Eliadian ambiguity of this formula, such a statement has a distinct position in the history of undermining the autonomy

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[2] See Jean Filliozat, "Les limites des pouvoirs humains en Inde", *Études carmélitaines* 1953 (*Limites de l'humain*), 23–38; or "The Limits of Human Power in India", in Jean Filliozat, *Philosophy Religion Yoga*, trsl. by Maurice Shukla, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, 341–359 (especially 352–354). The 1936 magazine was obtained by Filliozat from Jacques Bacot (1877–1965), the Tibetologist Eliade met in Calcutta in 1930 and again in Paris after 1945, but whose works impressed him less than fascinated Constantin Brâncuşi and Eugène Ionesco. Even Gombrich's purveyances were anticipated, not to mention the reviews on the 1936 edition, by Filliozat in his 'notice bibliographique' of *Techniques du Yoga*: "[o]n doit déplorer seulement le grand nombre des fautes d'impressions dans les mots sanskrits et les fautes de genre très fréquentes", *RHR* 135 (1949), 118–120 (here 120).

of history of religions, at least the one defended by Eliade. Without focusing on any religious theme or tradition, Rennie is eager to find theory and even a "philosophical agenda" almost everywhere in Eliade. I wonder, for instance, why Rennie's own contributions opt for so much "philosophy", or why the evidence for it is pursued unconvincingly. "It is surely no coincidence", Rennie goes on, "that the title of Eliade's major work, *Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom*, echoes the ideas of pure reason that for Kant become the postulates of practical reason: God, Immortality, and Freedom" (13). This hilarious phrase changes not only every previous reading, but also the title, which have not two commas (as on 4, 7, 13), but no comma. 18th century *Freiheit* instead of *mokṣa*? Certainly, an author who claimed to "deprovincialize" the "Kantian man", as the last two centuries of research strongly succeeded in doing, never acknowledged such comparison.

The secondary literature chosen by Rennie is well-known. *All* these authors were largely quoted in *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (Albany: SUNY, 1996). This critical reader may be seen as a companion volume for the most integrated Rennie's treatment of Eliade. The 21 contributions are by Douglas Allen (three), Gregory Alles, Robert Baird, Matei Calinescu, Gilford Dudley III, Richard Gombrich, Edmund Leach (1910-1989), William Paden, Ansgar Paus, John Saliba, Robert Segal, Ivan Strenski, John Valk, A. F. C. Webster, R.[aphael] J.[ehudah] Zwi Werblowsky, and of course by Bryan Rennie (four). Mac Linscott Ricketts added three valuable translations from Romanian, including a violent and baffling article titled "Blind Pilots", planned for an English translation in the 1980s.

As for contemporary authors, some had close connections with Eliade's *Encyclopedia* years, as Alles and Zwi Werblowsky (and Sullivan), some contributed to its first edition (Allen, Alles, Paden, Werblowsky), or to the second (Rennie, Saliba, Segal, Strenski). There are also prominent scholars (Gombrich) and academics coming from other fields (Calinescu). Edmund Leach's essay of 1966 is rather uncommon not only in Eliade exegesis but, as M. L. Ricketts maintained (*EoR*2, vol. 8, 5382a), in all of Leach's writings. Eliade (says his myth) never replied to such critiques or attacks. There is, it seems, only an oral proof (confirmed to me by Gregory Alles) that Eliade considered Saliba's book simply "stupid". We also can rely on Eliade's direct account, found in a letter to Stig Wikander (15 October 1966). Compared with the sober and definitive observations of Richard Gombrich, or with Werblowsky's (confirmed especially by the decades after 1989 in Romania), A. F. C. Webster's and Ansgar Paus' articles (1986 and 1989) are rudimentary melpots of undergraduate Eliade with undeveloped Christian Orthodoxy. One may wonder why the volume includes nothing from post-Eliade Chicago school,

contemporary Paris *milieu* or post-totalitarian Romania. There is no plausible reason to divorce different cultural *milieux* which Eliade himself has more or less successfully connected throughout. More generally, it would be wise not to ignore the adequate warning issued by Jonathan Z. Smith, in a splendid essay simply ideal for such a reader: "[i]t has long been my practice to set aside any study that claims to be a treatment of Eliade's project which is not centered on these four foundational works — *Patterns* [*in Comparative Religion*], *Shamanism*, *Yoga*, *the Forge and the Crucible* — and relies, instead, on his essays, published lectures, and more occasional writings").[3] *Pace* Valk, it is obvious that "[s]cholars have [*not*] struggled with his entire corpus" (176). Moreover, it seems there is not a single scholar (but not a biographer) who masters Eliade's work. More or less tacitly, the authors and readers are invited to reach an agreement: there is a need to cover and synthesize *all* his scholarly and cultural activity and biography, not to proceed by selecting freely at one's own convenience. Despite the value of this reader, there is no definitive attempt to determine the structure of Eliade's entire production, and no stimuli for complete classification.

To guide us through the very unbalanced works on Eliade issued after 1986, Rennie suggests that "when scholars desire to go further [...] a supportive bibliography makes this more easily possible" (3). This is of course true for the listing of many other titles left untouched in the book. Rennie's statement can also be misleading, since there are titles not at all representative for the three cities and scholarly contexts where Eliade spent most of his life. From more than 250 titles on Eliade, less than 70 are published after 1986, including all these here reprinted. Again, many of the 18 titles dating since 1994 (only 7%) have little relevance for the collection. The most worth reading literature on Eliade, including archival revelations and synthesis work, is unfortunately left aside, which is quite unsupportive. Rennie is ready to include authors of very unequal quality, as are all the "defenders" who are not scholars of religion.

The editorial work of this volume is not flawless. Many French, German, Italian, or Indian and Tibetan terms are unfortunately misspelled. There are also some combinations of typographical and conceptual errors.[4]

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[3] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Acknowledgements: Morphology and History in Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1949–1999) [I–II]," *History of Religions* 39/4 (2000), 315-351 (here 331, n. 47), now in his *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004, 61–100 (here 79 n. 47).

[4] Some examples: "Eliade returned to Bucharest" not "in 1932" (as in 7 and 25), but in 1931 (leaving India in November). Read Georges instead of "George" Dumézil (11), who did not "found Eliade a part-time post in the Sorbonne", but offered him twice (1946, 1948) to deliver lectures at his chair within the Section des Sciences reli-

    If a critical reader aims to assess the collective memory marked by a great scholarly apparition, nowadays it would be enough to imagine an email address such as meliade@uchicago.edu in order to understand how old an author Eliade necessarily becomes. When we aim to know "the meaning and end" of a true "international Eliade" we may find ourselves still in need to do much "reconstructing". Being a gifted commentator on a number of litigious points, Rennie closes his decade of exegetical work with a book where theory and methodology are still in the forefront of the debate. With the exception of editor's own papers, the volume seems to have been ready for print some 15 years ago. It reflects a topical and critical reading dating mainly from the 1960-1980s, being almost exclusively centered on the Anglophone world. A potential book since 1994 (used as such by some scholars), is thus more close to the old *Cahier de l'Herne Eliade* than to the actual state of the art. As the first reference to Eliade in English dates from 1932,[5] we have to acknowledge in fact that nowadays we possess many more tools to approach Eliade's work.

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gieuses at École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne. Born in the same year with Dumézil, Wach died not in 1958 (11), but on 27 August 1955. Otto's *Das Heilige* appeared not in 1918 (13), but, dated 1917, was issued in late 1916. What was titled as "Mythology and the History of Religions" is a review from *Diogene* 9 (1955), but the editor does not mention its future trajectory. One important article of Culianu cited in German in an English article is referred to its French translation only (432). I wonder why Eliade's contributions offered for celebrating colleagues and friends is not mentioned in the bibliography. In general Eliade (who wrote dozens of articles presenting in overviews the oeuvre of his masters or colleagues) contributed to these Festschriften with a good degree of suitness: thus "Briser le toit de la maison" (426) contributed to Gershom Scholem volume (1967), the 1973 "Notes on Călușari" (not "Calusari", 427) are offered to the son of Moses Gaster, Theodor Herzl Gaster, and the article on arrows is reprinted here from *Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (not specified here, 141 or 427, but mentioned in Oxtoby's title, 434; this volume appeared as Supplements to Numen XIV, a journal for which Eliade served as associate/consulting editor). And even "*Homo religiosus* and *homo faber*" is reprinted in the largest Gedenkschrift Tucci (Rome, IsMEO, 1987, vol. 1, 287–299). Finally, the readers will be surprised to see Sir Ernst Gombrich (father) and Richard F. Gombrich (son) to be confused in the index (440).

[5] See Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. II (first Indian edition, Delhi-Varanasi-Patna: Motilal Banarsidass), 1975 [1932]: vii–viii; also Eliade, "Dacă aș fi în America [If I were in America]", *Cuvântul* of 30 April 1932.

The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times. By Florian Ebeling, (transl. David Lorton; Foreword by Jan Assmann), Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007. xiii + 158 pp. ISBN 9780801445460.

German original: *Das Geheimnis des Hermes Trismegistos: Geschichte des Hermetismus von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, München: C.H. Beck, 2005. 214 pp. ISBN 3406528163.

The various textual corpora referred to as "hermetic" have not only generated a vast scholarly literature but continue to evoke much interest among the general public as well. Nevertheless, a short yet comprehensive overview of "hermeticism" from antiquity to the present was still lacking, and this small book therefore fills an important niche in the market. Given the high quality of current academic research particularly with respect to the ancient, medieval and early modern period, and the considerable theoretical problems of defining what "hermeti(ci)sm" is all about (see below), any scholar who dares to cover the field as a whole deserves credit and respect for his courage, but should also expect to be judged by strict criteria of excellence. The author of *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus* seems aware of this, and tries to temper too high expectations right at the outset: he admits that many aspects of the history of hermetic literature have been merely intimated or omitted entirely, and that he has therefore written 'not *the* history of Hermeticism but rather only one' (2).

This modest rejoinder is offset, however, by his ambitious claim of having been the first to correct major weaknesses and hiatuses in existing research. Firstly, his book claims to refute the 'common thesis' (vii) that hermeticism practically vanished during the middle ages (chapters II and III both open with that statement: 37, 59); and secondly, the author takes and is given credit (by Jan Assmann in the Foreword) for having "discovered" a complete, independent northern Hermetic tradition and thereby having 'fundamentally altered and expanded our understanding of Hermetic traditions' (vii–viii). Unfortunately, both of these claims are without foundation. Far from having single-handedly put medieval hermeticism back on the map, the author has chosen to ignore almost all the research that has been done in this area during the last decades, including the "Hermes Latinus" series edited by Paolo Lucentini and Vittoria Perrone Compagni since 1994, but almost never quoted by him, and many other fundamental contributions by these two major specialists (for a sample, see their almost 800-page volume *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism*, published by Brepols in 2003) and by others, such as

Claudio Moreschini, whose *Storia dell'Ermetismo Cristiano* (published in 2000) covers the ancient, medieval and early modern period in much greater detail than the book under review here. Likewise, the German tradition of "alchemo-paracelsism" was in no need of being "discovered", for its existence was quite well known (among the most important contemporary scholars, Joachim Telle and Carlos Gilly are mentioned occasionally). Therefore all that the author can legitimately take credit for is his decision to restrict the survey not only to texts dependent on or referring to the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius* but to also include alchemical discussions and their references to the *Tabula Smaragdina*.

Overblown pretensions apart, how good and reliable is this book as an introduction to the history of Hermeticism? First of all, we should look at what the author understands by that term. In the Introduction he makes clear that the overview is based on a 'pragmatic decision' of focusing only on works ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus or implicitly referring to his authority (1, 7). By doing so, he wisely avoids approaches based upon the idea that certain themes or worldviews are somehow intrinsically "hermetic" even if no reference is made to Hermes at all. But of course the decision comes at a heavy price, for while it avoids any non-historical essentialism, it begs the question of whether "hermeticism" can ever be anything more than an artificial construct by means of which a heterogeneous collection of texts is arbitrarily presented as a "tradition" for no other reason than that they happen to mention Hermes somewhere (while texts that do not do so are excluded, even if one cannot tell them apart on the basis of their contents).

This dilemma has bedeviled research in this domain, and while some highly competent scholars have defended the notion of an actual unified "Hermetic tradition", others with no less expertise have rejected any such idea (see e.g. my review of Lucentini et al. in *Aries* 7:2 [2007], 227–229). Therefore it would be quite unfair to blame the author for not having found a satisfactory solution; but it is regrettable that he does not take the opportunity of at least entering into this debate, discussing the problem in some depth, and clearly taking position. After all, his "pragmatic choice", while understandable enough, would seem to undermine the very possibility of presenting "Hermeticism" as a historical tradition at all.

Since this same "pragmatic choice" would also seem to preclude any idea of Hermeticism as being based on a universal "essence", it is all the more surprising that the author nevertheless keeps repeating the question of whether some such essence might exist. Thus on page 10–11 he lists the main categories of "philosophical" and "technical" Hermetica, and asks himself 'Can a common core be detected behind all these writings and doctrinal accounts?' (11), or

'Can we extract a central essence from these texts?' He proceeds, however, to summarize only some of the "philosophical" Hermetica (C.H. I, the *Asclepius*, NH VI[6], and *Kore Kosmou*) and none of the technical ones; and he never answers the question. It is asked again on page 29 ('What is the Essence of Hermeticism?') and 80 ('What is Hermetic Philosophy?'), but of course, the only outcome is the one that could have been predicted from the outset: if a mere reference to Hermes Trismegistus suffices to qualify a text as "Hermetic", then obviously there is no reason to expect discovering one "essence" in all of them. So why keep asking? With respect to other theoretical issues too, the author tends to merely mention some existing opinions without really entering into the debate and engaging the problems. See for example p. 35 about the *Sitz im Leben* of Hermetic literature; p. 82 about the role of Hermeticism in the face of confessional tensions and increasing polarization after the Reformation; or pp. 100–102 about the celebrated "Yates thesis". Again and again, the problem is clearly stated, but there is hardly any discussion, and no real answer is given.

This lack of engagement with theoretical and intellectual questions posed by the Hermetic literature results in a book that is almost completely descriptive, and large parts of which consist of little more than summaries of selected texts. Although the author admits (as we have seen) that his overview is not complete, one still has the right to ask by what criteria, if any, he has made his selection. While many relatively obscure (but therefore no less interesting!) German texts are summarized at length in the later parts of the book, the overview of key texts from the "philosophical" Hermetica (12–19) does not include such a crucial initiatic tract as C.H. XIII; Ficino is credited as the Latin translator of the *Corpus Hermeticum* while Lazzarelli as the other translator (C.H. XVI–XVIII) is overlooked; a key text in the "magical" Renaissance interpretation of Hermeticism like Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda* is never even mentioned, and so on.

In connection with that last point, one also misses any reference to the differences (highlighted by D.P. Walker in his classic study of the Renaissance *prisca theologia* tradition) between the relative emphasis on magic among the Italians and the non-magical approach dominant in France. These differences are far more important than one would infer from the discussions in this book: the conflict between Lactantius' positive evaluation of Hermes and Augustine's rejection of him as an idolater (with reference to the so-called "god-making" passages in *Ascl.* 23–24/37–38), the far-reaching impact that this conflict had on the medieval reception history of the Hermetica (with Guillaume d'Auvergne playing a pivotal role), and the importance of both for the Renaissance debate on *magia naturalis* (and related questions about the

relation between hermeticism and science) are all mentioned merely in passing, as if they are mere details. Due to this neglect, the author misses many chances of demonstrating why the history of hermeticism is not just an antiquarian topic interesting merely to specialists, but has great relevance and importance with respect to wider intellectual debates and historical developments from antiquity to early modernity.

The historical overviews themselves tend to be correct in their broad outlines but, unfortunately, often unreliable when it comes to details. The *Corpus Hermeticum* is said to contain 'eighteen tractates' (10), whereas of course there are only seventeen (C.H. XV does not exist), and on page 95 it is confused with the *Asclepius*, so that the naïve reader would assume the latter was translated by Ficino. Ficino's *Pimander* is repeatedly referred to as the *Poimander* (34, 98). On pp. 82 the author introduces Sebastian Franck as 'a remarkable exponent of Hermeticism', so that one is surprised to read on the next page that 'Certainly Franck was no Hermetist'. Admittedly the first sentence turns out to be a mistranslation from the German, and should have read 'recipient' rather than 'exponent'; but nobody seems to have taken the trouble to read the English manuscript critically, as can also be seen from a far too large number of unnecessary errors such as 'Foix de Dandale' (64) or the fact that Matthieu Béroalde is presented as "Berodale" twice in the same sentence (95). Although the translation is mostly reliable, it does contain a number of serious mistakes, which could easily have been spotted because they result in obvious nonsense. A good example is page 120: 'As conventional as the image of Hermes was, it was so original that it was transferred to the *Corpus Hermeticum*' (the German original does make sense, and could have been translated as 'As conventional as this image of Hermes is, as original is it that this image is applied to the *Corpus Hermeticum*').

More serious are the cases where the author repeats outdated perspectives even while quoting the recent literature where the latter are corrected. Thus at the beginning of chapter IV he presents Isaac Casaubon's dating of the *Hermetica* (1614) as the pivotal event that undermined their authority. In doing so he entirely adopts Frances Yates' thesis in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), while ignoring the fact that Casaubon's centrality or priority was thoroughly refuted in Martin Mulsow's *Das Ende des Hermetismus* (2002), which he quotes himself on the very same page (91; on this debate, cf. my review in *Aries* 4:1 [2004], 108–111). Likewise, in discussing the relation between the "Hermetic Science" of alchemy and modern natural science, he seems unaware of the new wave of Anglophone research in that domain, with crucial authors such as William Newman and Lawrence M. Principe.

This brings me to another problem with this book: its German provincialism, and lack of any attempt to adapt the original to the requirements of an English translation. It is hard to understand how the publisher ever accepted the author's choice of referring for all his quotations of the Hermetica to the German edition by Colpe and Holzhausen (*Das Corpus Hermeticum Deutsch*, 1997) rather than to the Standard English translation by Copenhaver. This is made even worse by the fact that the author does not use the internationally accepted numbering based upon Nock/Festugière, but quotes only the page numbers of the Colpe/Holzhausen edition! The result is, of course, that any reader who does not have a copy of the latter (and how many non-German readers will have bought that excellent but very expensive book?) will be wholly unable to find the passages at all. These are unforgivable sins in an academic publication: it would have required no more than a day's work to correct them. Likewise, what to think of the long quotation from *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, presented in English on pp. 52–53 but referenced to a German translation by Kurt Flasch taken from … the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*? On page 102 an article by Brian Vickers on the occult sciences is quoted in a German translation which will, again, be hardly accessible to the English reader: why not have taken the trouble to find Vickers' well-known English texts on that topic and referring to them instead? On page 137 the author goes so far as to discuss the subtitle of the German translation of a book by Julius Evola, which happens to be wholly different from the original Italian subtitle and its English translation, and therefore obviously without any relevance here: again, why not have taken the trouble to find at least the English (and preferably the Italian) translation, and adapt the text for its English readership?

Generally speaking, the reference style is extremely careless throughout the book: for example, a whole series of texts discussed on page 22 are left without any source references; on page 30, B.H. Stricker's opinions are discussed, but no title is given either in a note or in the bibliography; and for a specific thesis by a specialist as important as Jean-Pierre Mahé, the reader is referred simply to his 2-volume standard work as a whole, without any page reference. Much worse than this, the author seems to have no problem with using internet references for texts as important as Ficino's *Argumentum* (the version on page 62 seems to be an English translation from Eckart Kessler's German translation of Ficino's Latin: why not have taken the trouble to check the English translation against the Latin in Ficino's *Opera Omnia*, and refer to the latter?), or as his only source for a passage about modern "occultist" adaptations of Hermeticism (see p. 139: checking the site in question, this reviewer no longer found the reference, but was directed instead to commercial advertisements for "Hermes perfume", "Hermes hotels" and so on!).

This last example brings me to a further hiatus. After the 17th century, the overview becomes increasingly fragmented: in fact, there is more missing here than is present. Chapter V, about the 18th–19th centuries, seems to assume that Hermetism survived only in the German context, and utterly neglects the entire occultist tradition of English neo-Hermetism. If one chooses to trace Hermeticism all the way into the 19th and 20th centuries, then something at least should be said about such important topics as Mary Anne Atwood's *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850), Anna Kingsford's *Hermetic Society* and her translations in *The Virgin of the World of Hermes Trismegistus* (1885), the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, or G.R.S. Mead's hugely influential translations published in three volumes as *Thrice Greatest Hermes* (1906). Of course the author might have decided to leave occultist interpretations out of his book altogether, but for some reason, in his final chapter on the 20th century, he does devote an entire section to Julius Evola's *The Hermetic Tradition* (1931). Having examined it (superficially), he concludes with the amazing statement that such 'esoteric Hermeticism… can no longer be the object of scientific examination, as it requires loyalty and belief, which is incompatible with common sense or with today's traditional standards of rationality' (138). With all due respect, this is obvious nonsense. Are we to assume that Hermetism in late antiquity required no loyalty or belief from its adherents? Were all the ancient or early modern "hermetists" so rational and commonsensical — or should they be? Does the author seriously consider it impossible to study contemporary religious worldviews unless they are compatible with his own standards of common sense or rationality?

One is forced to conclude that the author of this book is not equal to the task he has set himself. It is no pleasant task to criticize a young scholar as severely as I have been doing, and I do not consider *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus* to be wholly without merit. It certainly contains enough useful discussions that allow the reader to gain a first impression of various aspects of the field, and undoubtedly the author has some valuable things to say about the domain he knows best: "alchemo-paracelsism" in the German domain. It might also be pointed out that many of the issues raised above (with the notable exception of the last one, about the 19th–20th centuries) would be relatively easy to correct. Hopefully the publisher will eventually consider a second edition, and will allow the author to use that opportunity for making the thorough revisions that are necessary. If this is done, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus* might yet develop into a solid and reliable introduction to this fascinating and important area of research.

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E-Religion. A Critical Appraisal of Religious Discourse on the World Wide Web.
By Anastasia Karaflogka. London: Equinox, 2007. 264 p. + CD. ISBN
978-1-90476-884-5 (pbk.). $29.95.

This book links two fields of research for the benefit of both: the study of
information communication technologies (ICTs) and the study of religions.
This review focuses only on these chapters and aspects which are of primary
interest to historians of religions. In seven chapters, Anastasia Karaflogka pro-
vides a set of methodological tools and reflections for investigating "e-reli-
gions", that is the many forms of religious discourse in and on cyberspace.
Karaflogka's study will benefit researchers who already have experience in
studying religions and ICTs, and it will help those in need of a coherent and
pragmatic methodology to manage the study of religions on the immensity of
the World Wide Web. Whatever your domain of study, knowing how search
tools work will help make you an efficient user and facilitate your research.

The first chapter retraces the history of the Internet and its spread, recalling
the hidden values linked to its creation. Karaflogka exposes the many ways in
which the Internet, the Web and cyberspace have been perceived by society in
general and by religious groups in particular. The subtitle specifies that the
object under appraisal is religious *discourse*, which she understands in the Fou-
cauldian sense and with a polythetic definition of religion. Karaflogka retraces
the historiography of religious discourse and cyberspace. She recalls her own
experience of "being online" as a student and how she started her investigation
on religions and the Internet. From the beginning, she framed typologies of
the websites she visited, but soon enough, she realized that the categories she
first shaped were inadequate. Therefore, she reduced these more and more and
ended up with two broad but useful categories which are worth quoting here
in extenso:

> What I called "religion on cyberspace" referred to the information uploaded by
> any religion (institutionalized or not), church, individual or organization which
> also exists and can be reached in the offline world. In this sense the Internet is
> used as a tool. "Religion in cyberspace", on the other hand, denoted a religious,
> spiritual or metaphysical expression, which is created and exists exclusively in
> cyberspace. The Internet in this case is used as an environment. (14)

Chapter 2 is a state of the art of literature on religion and the Internet. It helps
the author to shape the epistemological, theoretical and methodological
aspects of her study, but it is too detailed and technical to be discussed at any
length in this review.

Chapter 3 is mostly about the epistemology needed to understand the Web in general and is not much concerned with religion (except on page 67). This part of the study deals with the accessibility and structure of the Web. Karaflogka recalls important facts about worldwide accessibility and the multiplicity of users, providing recent data and numbers to document it. Indeed, most people on the planet are excluded from the Web, whereas others have privileged access. This enables them to dominate the e-religious discourse. The discrepancy in the global and local access to the Web ("digital divide") depends on many factors such as income, age, disability, gender, localization, education, or infrastructure. Karaflogka highlights the problems of access in terms of physical access (computer and connection) and in terms of ability to efficiently use ICTs. Literacy and the overwhelming use of English on the Web pages are key factors in this. Karaflogka then discusses access to the Web as a political or religious weapon against governments and organizations, its corollary being the many forms of censorship and control by political and religious entities. Her insistance on these issues will prove pertinent for the study of religions in a global context, thinking for example of recent events surrounding the preparation of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and control over the Internet in China (images of riots in Tibet or of incidents during the passage of the Olympic flame, censorship or auto-censorship of specific websites such as YouTube and Google).

To fully understand what it means to access information through the Web, its content must not be isolated from the technical foundations which support it because these have implications for researchers. By explaining technological subtelties such as the difference between "deep Web" and "surface Web" and by providing a survey of familiar terminology and technical definitions, Karaflogka demystifies the way search engines work, along with their indexing and ranking processes. She justly points out that the Web gives access to resources and specialized tools (including some that facilitate the study of religions, the exact names of which she could have mentioned explicitly at this point). This might be of interest to those who teach to undergraduate students, some of whom have a regrettable tendency to use Wikipedia as a first resort when searching for information about religions, when other, better, resources are available. Whatever the performance of these search engines, we must know their limitations and understand the ways in which these tools find the requested information that is their operationality.

Like the term "religion", "communication" has many definitions and the author surveys some of these in the very dense chapter 4, along with theories of communication. For instance, she recalls the distinction between "time-biased" and "space-biased" media (89). According to the author, computer

mediated communication "can be defined as both a time and a space-biased medium because it has not only the diminished spatial boundaries, but also the ability to preserve information through time" (91). She covers theories of technology and successfully shows that technology has been linked with religion in many contexts (examples from Mesopotamia, the Bible, Judeo-Christian context and Protestant work ethic in particular). The relationship between religion and technology forms a subchapter encompassing a review of anti-technological views, technology and the Scripture, and an analysis of the technological quest as a "religious-spiritual quest" (105). To complete the chapter, Karaflogka discusses theories of Cyberspace and the reasons for the drive to embrace ICTs. Definitions and perceptions of Cyberspace are also various. She explains the idea of "Noosphere" (cf. Theilhard de Chardin) and its possible application to Cyberspace. Finally, techno-religious responses are explored with detailed examples of many traditions, such as the Catholic Church, Sivananda Yoga, or a Hasidic on-line Rabbi.

Karaflogka exposes her research process and method in chapter 5. Over the space of a decade, she identified representative samples of websites. She explains how her assumptions have changed over time (such as the size of the community of cybernauts in the world population or the fact that all religious groups could/would be on-line). At first she did not think of discussing at length the question of access to the Internet, whereas this is now a major part of her book. She is in fact well aware of her limitations (e. g. languages) and of the fact that the shape of her study is conditioned by external circumstances such as location and technical infrastructure. She collected her data and searched the Web principally by using keywords. This, or more precisely her distinction between "specific" and "general" keywords, might be problematic to historians of religions. Examples of so-called specific keywords are "Islam" or "Judaism" whereas general keywords would be "religion", "church" or "synagogue". To me, "Islam" sounds rather general and "church" a little bit more specific. We could wonder if she used any more "specific" non-Christian keywords such as "bhakti" or "shugendo". Apart from this dubious distinction, the rest of the method seems quite appropriate and pragmatic for dealing with the immensity of data found on the Web.

Time and the versatility of the Web represent main methodological difficulties in this type of research. Karaflogka has used a multidimensional approach to search the Web and has collected a number of websites whose "exact count" is technically impossible, as she explains in a note. Her estimation is "in the region of thousands" (233). She also had to deal with the issue of the position of the researcher. She used both "observation ethnography" and "informant ethnography". This shows well that in the context of studying religions in

cyberspace as in other places, one has to pay attention to this important issue and chose one method or the other, or even both alternately. Contacting religious groups by e-mail whenever this was possible, she asked her informants questions about the country of origin or the group, its founders, its possible offline existence, its community, philosophy, relationship with cyberspace, and so on. Thus she gathered valuable information that she would not have accessed otherwise and this could enhance her methodological perspective and analysis.

The main claim of chapter 6 is to present new possibilities for conducting research with the Internet, considering it not simply as an instrument, as has been done thus far, but also as a social space and environment (142). These injunctions, as for the rest of the book, will appeal only to those who have already "tasted" the study of religions on-line, in their various forms. Karaflogka proposes valuable paths to be explored, but only initiates will understand what she is writing about due to the complexity of the material and of the issues. The methodology articulates itself in the exploration of the cartography and topography of websites, and of temporal dimensions (synchronic and diachronic approaches). Karaflogka's proposed methodology takes all the elements of the field into account, thus revealing aspects of religions that might have been neglected with a focus only on the textual type of material.

In the concluding chapter, Karaflogka shows herself to be reflexive and self-critical about the assumptions she had when she first began her study. ICTs have offered (some) humans empowerment, freedom of speech on a very large scale without restrictions on time or distance, and communication within the "global village" (199). The author makes it very clear that technology is not neutral and free from values until it is "available universally without any restrictions" (200). This is not yet the case. Hence, the diverse expressions of e-religions are only those of a minority within the minority of the connected. Karaflogka even uses the term "elite" (200) because it is not a matter of choice only but also of capability and affordability.

Pages 207 to 212 consist in a glossary of terms that are constantly used in their abbreviated forms throughout the study. Karaflogka's study ends with an extended bibliography (pp. 241–264). It is specified if and where articles are available on-line. The best surprise comes at the very end of the book: there is a CD of the whole book in PDF format, which allows readers to search for specific terms in the text.

It is crucial for researchers to know about the structure of the Web and the way it operates. Karaflogka masters these issues and explains them remarkably well in her third chapter on Web epistemology. She shows how important the links are between technology and metaphysical or religious discourse. In the

last chapter, Karaflogka sketches three questions raised by her examination: the evocation of new discourses, the generation of new practices and the alteration of the conditions of religious life. She does not bring definite answers but hints at what should be explored more deeply.

Apart from the broad division into chapters, other divisions of the book are unclear and misleading for the reader. Subtitles within the chapters are not sufficient to indicate the structure of the content. Clearly labeling and numbering these sub-chapters and paragraphs would have greatly facilitated the reading. Indeed, Karaflogka's study is really dense. It is her merit to try to explain and make explicit technical issues that are very complicated for the non-specialist reader. This book should not therefore be recommended for beginners or students casually interested in the subject, as it is still very difficult to grasp Karaflogka's nuanced explanations and proposals if one has never dealt with these issues before. *E-religions* is a welcome update on the different approaches and methodologies for the study of e-religions and other forms of religions on the Internet. This book should open the way to more detailed and refined research on specific trends of religions, it has therefore definitely reached its goal in giving "a critical appraisal of religious discourse on the World Wide Web".

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